EMPOWERING VOICES: BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND COMFORT IN PUBLIC SPEAKING FOR YOUNG ADULT BLACK MALES

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ABSTRACT

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This project's implementation addresses the lack of confidence and comfort with public speaking among eighteen- to twenty-four-year-old Black males at St. Mark Baptist Church. To address this need, a six week program, influenced by TED Talk public speaking principles, was implemented to cultivate clarity, confidence, and comfort. Participants engaged in speaking activities and exercises, received constructive feedback, and benefited from peer support in public speaking and ministry involvement. Pre and post surveys measured growth in confidence and comfort. The project empowered participants to become effective communicators and to have broader conversations about helping young adult Black males with public speaking.

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To my church, the St. Mark Baptist Church, thank you for your love, your financial support, and assistance. Thank you for taking care of me. You all are forever indebted in my heart. To my pastor, Dr. Phillip L. Pointer, Sr., thank you for giving me a chance. Thank you for being a model for me in life and ministry. I love you, and you are forever indebted in my heart.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my grandfather, Rev. Curlee Thomas; my grandmother, Bertha Thomas; my uncle, the Rev. Dr. Earl L. Thomas; and my mother, Carol Thomas. They are the individuals who inspired and motivated me to pursue higher education in Christian Education.

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INTRODUCTION

There is a fear associated with public speaking. No one likes to stand up in front of people, nor does one want to be the center of attention. However, public speaking is needed to communicate ideas and concepts. In the context of St. Mark Baptist Church, there are more women than men who volunteer to stand up in front of the church to do welcome, announcements, or anything related to public speaking, which is why there is a lack of ministry engagement among young adult Black males, eighteen to twenty-four.

This project on building confidence and comfort in young adult Black males, ages eighteen to twenty-four, was designed to increase their willingness to engage in public speaking so they will participate in public ministry activities. This project was influenced by a biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary insight to create a holistic model for the participants.

This introduction will explain each chapter. I believe this project will result in younger adult Black males becoming more willing, confident, and comfortable engaging in public speaking, which will lead to an increase in young adult Black male participation in ministerial activities.

Chapter One, Ministry Focus, ties the spiritual autobiography and context of St. Mark Baptist Church. The connection that was made was the researcher's speech impediment and lack of willingness to engage in public speaking, and the lack of young adult Black males engaging in public speaking at St. Mark Baptist Church. Chapter One

also focuses on the ministry journey of the researcher and how he dealt with traumatic experiences as an adolescent and teenage years. It mentions how the researcher feared speaking in front of people and dreaded reading aloud when the teacher would call on him to read aloud in the class. The reasons mentioned in is the reason why he ran from the pursuing the ministerial call that God has placed on his life.

Chapter Two explores Exodus 4:10-17, which recounts the conversation between God and Moses and Moses' reluctance to fulfill what God has placed on his life because of his fear and his speech impediment. Despite the reluctance of Moses, God promises to be with him and sends his brother Aaron to be his support and assistant in helping fulfill his purpose by liberating God's people from Egyptian bondage. Moses shows us that the call that God places on the lives of human cannot be accomplished through human strength or ability, but by God's divine power.

Chapter Three focuses on the historical figure, Philip Melanchthon. He was a key figure during the Reformation period. He was a close friend and colleague of Martin Luther. Melanchthon had a speech impediment, and it was reported that he feared public speaking. However, he was still greatly used by making a huge impact on Christian education through his speaking and writing.

Chapter Four covers anthropology. It highlights the study of man and his creation in the Imago Dei. However, when sin entered the world according to Genesis 3, it created fear in humanity. We see that when Adam and Eve covered themselves and hid from God after they ate the fruit. Although sin entered the world, Jesus Christ was sent to redeem mankind and restore its image. Participants can have confidence despite their fears

because of who they are in Christ and the power of the Spirit available to them to help them engage in public communication and ministry.

Chapter Five covers Communication Theory. Communication Theory provides a framework for understanding how humans communicate and receive communication, as well as the communication barriers. The purpose of Communication Theory is to help explain and improve how we can improve in our communications so that we can have better connections with one another.

Chapter Six covers the project analysis of the project implementation. It covers the data for all the methodologies and the summary of learning. It highlights the feedback given to each participant after their final speeches at the end of the project.

This project has created a framework for St. Mark Baptist Church to help young adult Black males, ages eighteen to twenty-four, become more confident and comfortable engaging in public speaking and public ministry. This project has created a willingness among all participants to engage in public communication and to be more vocal in their areas of influence. Because of this project, I believe this model can be taken nationwide to help any young adult Black male engage in public speaking.

By adopting this framework, other churches, schools, and higher education institutions across the country can used this to help and equip young adult Black males to become more comfortable and confident engaging in public speaking, ministry and other areas that require public speaking, and leadership. This framework will foster a new generation of young adult Black males who will cultivate empowered voices that within their respective communities.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Introduction

I became a member of St. Mark Baptist Church in October 2016. Before I answered my call to the ministry, I served on the Media Team in the Media Ministry. The Media Team is led by Tiffany Brown. It was under her leadership that I learned how to direct the master board that facilitated the shots that were being shown in service and on our livestream. I learned how to work the cameras that we used during service. Ms. Brown taught me how servant leadership is just as important behind the scenes as it is in the pulpit.

Throughout my time serving on the Media Team, I started to develop a passion for God's Word. While the preacher was preaching, whether it would be our senior pastor, pastor on staff, or a guest preacher, I would generally be the only one who was locked in and paying attention to what the preacher was preaching. Mr. Kevin Noble, who also served on the Media Team, was someone who could tell that I was interested in preaching. We would have conversations about the preacher who preached and the message that was preached. It is like he knew that I wanted to pursue ministry because of how attentive I was when the preacher stood in the pulpit.

When I moved to Memphis, Tennessee, Mr. Noble and I stayed connected. He always checked in on me. When I would share with him what I was going through

spiritually, he told me that God had me in my "wilderness season." He told me that God isolated me so that God could help me see what God was doing in me and preparing for me. So, part of my journey coming back home to Little Rock, Arkansas was guided by men like Mr. Kevin Noble, Dr. Philip Pointer, Sr., and Pastor Justin Bilson. These men and others along the way played a pivotal role in helping me see what God was doing in my life while preparing me for what He was calling me to which is Christian Education and pastoral ministry.

Context

The Males Rites of Passage Ministry was established under the leadership of Youth Pastor Prentice Dupins in 1993, when St. Mark Baptist Church was located at 3221 Gaines Street, Little Rock, Arkansas. When the church moved from 3221 Gaines Street to 5722 West 12th Street is when the impact of its ministry grew. The Males Rites of Passage Ministry was developed from the African tradition of passage from child stage into the adult stage of development. The term "passage" means the act or process, transition, or movement from one condition to another.[1] For St. Mark, the Males Rites of Passage was the celebration marking a successful transition from one season of life to another.

The ministry was developed to provide guidance to young boys as they moved through their years of adolescence. The primary objective of the ministry was to equip them with godly principles of manhood, in the hope of facilitating a successful transition into manhood. The five areas of development that served as the core for this ministry

[1] "Passage," *Oxford English Dictionary* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007).

were spiritual growth, social skills, physical skills, academic skills, and emotional maturity. The spiritual growth component was designed to teach them the Word of God as they discovered their life's purpose. The social skills component was designed to teach them how to interact with other people. The physical skills component was designed to show them how to maximize the potential of their physical bodies. The academic skills component was designed to challenge them to gain knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. The emotional maturity component was designed to develop stability in their relationships with others.

The spiritual principles of discipline, obedience, sacrifice, unity and purpose served as the spiritual foundation of the program. Each principle was introduced during the five weekend retreats. There were materials that were provided during the weekly meetings and weekend retreats. Each young man was served by an adult that guided them with the assistance of family through the process of becoming a man.

The Males Rites of Passage consisted of five positions. They were the elders' council, ministry directors, coordinators, guides, and learners. The elders' council consisted of men at St. Mark Baptist Church who served as a resource for the ministry. Their insight and wisdom were used to guide the program. They interviewed the prospective guides and learners. The elders' council was held accountable for all parts of the ministry. The ministry directors coordinated the overall efforts of each ministry and served as liaisons between the elder's council and the program. The programs that were provided were under the direction of a coordinator. The coordinator was responsible for communication and oversight of their program. The guides were men who directly served the young men in the ministry. They were responsible for helping the learners to gain as

much as possible while in the ministry. The guides were required to work closely with the parents, elders' council, and directors to provide the best assistance for each young man. The learners were the young men who participated in the ministry. It was their responsibility to utilize all the resources that was made available to them to reach their goals and requirements for the program.

St. Mark Baptist Church launched a new mentorship program called Forty Under Forty. This program is designed to pair younger men with older men in the church. There was an interesting meeting that was held on October 7, 2023. In this interest meeting, we talked about the importance of mentorship and why it is important for a young man to be connected to someone who is older and wiser in the church. We went over what mentorship is and why it is important in the life of our church as we prepare to move forward. This section was led by our Connections Pastor, John Richards, Jr. We went over biblical models of mentorship. This section was led by our Discipleship Pastor, Earnest Thomas. This program is in its infancy stage. Therefore, we do not have any information on file that breaks down the components and objectives

St. Mark's Baptist Church Youth Ministry has parted with two organizations that helps and assist foster kids and families who has foster kids. One of the programs they partner with is called Family Remix. This program is designed to help and serve families who have adopted kids. The other program they are partnered with is called the Care Portal. The Care Portal uses a database to help meet the needs of kids and family in crisis.[2] The Youth Ministry have held meetings for the church to get the members

[2] Care Portal, "The Global Orphan Project," Care Portal, https://www.careportal.org/.

involved in sponsoring a child or helping take care of the needs of a child. There was not a lot of participation in this effort.

Ministry Journey

When I felt the call to pursue ministry, I did not want to accept it because of my speech impediment. I always feared standing up in front of people. I did not want to read in front of people. When I was a child, my classmates would laugh at me when I stammered over words. My speech impediment made me feel useless and worthless; and it is because of my feelings regarding my speech impediment that caused me to run from pursuing ministry. Around 2018, I had a conversation about being called to ministry with Dr. Phillip Pointer, Sr. I told him about my reservation because of my speech impediment. His response was that those are the people that God calls. Although this was insightful, I still decided to run by going to Memphis, Tennessee where I pursued my higher education at the University of Memphis. During this time, I was staying with my uncle, Joseph Thomas. I shared with him what God was calling me to, and I thought that since he was my uncle, he would give me the opportunity to exercise my call. I felt comfortable doing it at his church because he was my uncle. The church he was pastoring was a small church; but he did not give me the opportunity. So, that added more fuel to my reservation and fear of being called to preach. I was not called because I had a speech impediment; and I was not called because my own uncle would not give me a chance to preach to prove the calling.

The feeling of rejection kept me running until finally a woman that I never met prophesied to me saying that I was called to preach. After prayer, consulting with my

pastor and brothers, I felt that I needed to move back. My fraternity brother, Michael Jackson, told me that he felt that I was going in the wrong direction. He felt like that I was running from what God was calling me to, and this is someone who does not have a church background. So, I had decided to move back and pursue the calling on my life.

I started my ministry journey at St. Mark in January 2020. When I moved back to Little Rock, Arkansas from Memphis, Tennessee is when I started sitting under my pastor, Dr. Phillip Pointer, Sr. One of the topics that was discussed before pursing ministry was me going to seminary. So, in the summer of 2020, I applied for Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary for their Master of Divinity program. During my time at Southwestern, I enrolled in a variety of courses that provided me with knowledge about expository preaching, church history, and the original languages that helped me craft sermons. I preached my first sermon in my Introduction to Expository Preaching class. This was a humbling and awkward experience. It was humbling because I received the opportunity to preach; but it was awkward because of how I preached the sermon. I preached the sermon with Beats by Dre headphones on, and I preached to my classmates virtually to my MacBook. I was in my office standing behind a podium. The text I was assigned to preach was 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

The next opportunity I received to preach was in my Advanced Expository Preaching class. I had to preach two sermons. One from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament. The text I preached from the Old Testament was Exodus 4:1-17. The text I preached from the New Testament was Luke 16:1-13. Both sermons were to be presented in a deductive format, which is retelling the story in narrative form. I recorded both sermons at St. Mark Baptist Church. Just like my first sermon, it was a humbling

and awkward experience because in this case, I had to preach to a camera. There was no one in the auditorium. It was odd because there was no human interaction. However, I was glad that I could preach to get familiar and comfortable standing in an auditorium.

My first in-person sermon was at McPherson Women's Unit in Newport, Arkansas. This was an amazing and eye-opening experience. My first in-person sermon opportunity was to preach to incarcerated women. The atmosphere was energetic and they were interacting with what I am preaching. Although I was focused more on how I looked and how I preached, they were happy that someone came to see them and came to preach to them. The text I preached was Psalm chapter thirteen and I titled it "How to Make It Through Silent Nights." I received several affirmations; but the one affirmation that stood out was from a black woman who locked eye with me and said "Thank you. This is what I needed to hear." This opportunity has given me a greater appreciation for preaching and preaching to God's people. As I was traveling back to Little Rock, the thought that came to mind was "The Gospel is not just for people on the outside. The Gospel is also for those who are prison."

I was given another opportunity to preach at Central Arkansas Community Correction Center which is an all-male prison. The feelings I felt were different from my first in-person sermon because of the prison being all-male. However, the experience was like McPherson Women's Unit. I preached Genesis 39:19-23 and I titled it "Versatile Favor." I was hesitant to preach this sermon because it is about Joseph being in a prison; but it was helpful for them.

While I was at seminary, I worked at a Student Success Coach at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. Although I would not classify this as "ministry," I believe that I

could do ministry by serving and helping the college students I encountered. Some of the students that I mentored always came to me with questions about God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Bible. I believe that my time at UA-Little Rock has prepared me to do ministry at St. Mark Baptist Church. I could develop some pastor like qualities that gave me the opportunity to watch over the souls of the students who came to me to ask for prayer, wisdom, etc. Some of the students called me "Pops" because of my demeanor. Others called me their spiritual father because I was the only one they came to talk about the Bible. In some situations, I have closed my office and prayed with and for the students who needed prayer. I would like to characterize UA-Little Rock as my first "church" because of the ministry that God gave me the opportunity to do for those college students.

My ministry journey has been up and down because I do not know exactly what God is calling me to do. I have an idea of what He is calling me to; but I have not been licensed or affirmed. So, at times, I wonder if I am called to preach and pastoral ministry. God has open doors for me to exercise and develop the preaching and teaching gift I feel God has given me. However, I am not confident like I think I should be for me to walk with assurance. However, I thank God for men like Pastor Earnest Thomas, Pastor John Richards, Jr., and Elder Lamarr Bailey. These men have encouraged me when I lacked faith and when my mind is bombarded with doubts and fears when I am given an opportunity to preach and teach God's Words.

Synergy

One of my points of connection between my spiritual autobiography and contextual analysis is my church experience. I have been in church all my life. In the words of my Pastor, “I am Baptist born and Baptist washed. And when I die, I will be Baptist dead.” The church experience has played a vital role in shaping my faith and belief in God. I was at church for everything. I went to church with my mom when I was a baby until she passed away in 2019. Some of the experiences I can remember was my time at Pilgrim Progress Baptist Church in North Little Rock, Arkansas where the Rev. Dr. Gerald Parker, Sr. was my pastor. I learned a lot sitting under Dr. Parker. One of the sermon series I can remember that was helpful was his sermon series called “The Beatitudes.” He went through each verse of Matthew 5:1-11. It is because of him that I have sermon outlines for each verse. The last program I was in was the youth choir. This ministry was led by my uncle, Paul Scott, who was also the minister of music. Singing has always run in my family. So, being in the choir was not an option. However, I enjoyed doing it then because I learned how to praise God in a real and genuine way.

At my childhood church, I was active. I was in the youth ministry. The youth ministry was led by Ms. Deborah Adams. Ms. Adams taught me the importance of reading God’s Word and memorizing it. One of the passages of scripture every youth had to memorize, know, and recite was Psalm 100. Ms. Adams took reading and studying God’s Word seriously. If we did not know the books of the Bible or certain scriptures, she would fuss at us. Another program I was involved in was the Junior Deacon Ministry. This ministry was led by Deacon Jim Marshall. Deacon Marshall always gave me the assignment to sing a hymn. He is the reason I know the hymns that I do know today.

Being on the Junior Deacon Ministry gave me the confidence to stand up in front of people, especially when I would sing. I loved seeing other people in the audience singing the hymn that I would select to sing. Another program I was in was the Junior Usher Ministry. This ministry was led by Deacon Redo Reed. I learned the importance of serving with a smile on your face. The usher was generally the first person that was approached when someone entered church. My time on the Junior Usher board taught me how to serve from the back of the church.

Mentorship is another point of connection between my spiritual autobiography and contextual analysis. In every critical moment of my life, I had a male mentor who helped me navigate through those critical moments. St. Mark Baptist Church has a program for man to young man mentorship; but the program is new. We did not have a lot of men to show up. Out of 3,147 men only ten men showed up. There is a great amount of young men joining our church. However, we do not have a well-oiled program that they can join to help them navigate their spiritual and social life. The Forty Under Forty Program can be beneficial for young men my age. I am interested in providing a mentor for every young male that joins St. Mark Baptist Church. I believe that my story could be used to express why mentorship is important, especially for Black young men. I could navigate life and its challenges in a healthy way because I had the biblical guidance, assistance, and financial support of older men as it relates to life and ministry. My mentors help me build my faith in God and they helped me get closer with God.

I believe that my experiences and ministerial skills can serve the need for male mentorship in my context. When I moved back from Memphis, Tennessee, there were several men that helped me moved back to Little Rock, Arkansas, when I felt like God

was calling me to pastoral ministry and preaching and teaching. Those men were Deacon Kevin Noble, Pastor Justin Bilson, Christopher Fanning, and Dr. Phillip Pointer, Sr. When I was contemplating moving move back in December 2019, I did not have a plan or a strategy. I just had a word from God to move back. The first mentor I called was Dr. Pointer. I informed him what I was dealing with and the experience I had when I was prophesied to about being called to preach. His wisdom to me was to "stay before the Lord." After a couple of days of meditating on his advice, I decided that it was time for me to go back home. I just could not stay another day longer in Memphis, Tennessee. So, I called Pastor Bilson and Chris, and I told them what I wanted to do. I had their help and support. However, the issue I had was I did not have any money to buy a U-Haul so that I could move back. So, I called Deacon Noble who I call "Unc." I told him what I wanted to do. When I informed him, he told me that he would buy the U-Haul for me. Pastor Bilson and Chris came up from Little Rock to help me move back. I could navigate this transition smoothly because I had mentors who guided me and gave me the money and hands that I needed to move back.

Since I have been back in Little Rock, Arkansas, there are a couple of men who have helped shaped me into the man that I am today. Those men are Lamar Bailey and Dr. Pointer. As I was trying to discern what God was doing in my life when I moved back, Lamar Bailey introduced himself to me. One of the things he told me when I started Dr. Pointer's process was "whatever you need, I got you." In response to that, I decided to develop a relationship with him. Mr. Bailey has taught me a lot since I have been back. He has taught how leaders do not have to be on a platform to be considered a leader. Mr. Bailey serves at the Executive Pastor and Elder for St. Mark Baptist Church. He is kind,

meek, and has a big heart for God and God's people. He shows it through his interaction with the full-time and part-time staff and the congregants. Through his life and his interaction with me, he has taught me the importance of modeling humility. Mr. Bailey supported me by buying food when I did not have a job. I would always come up to the church to read, study, and help where needed. It is like Mr. Bailey knew what I needed when I needed it because there would be times where I would go without eating. On those days, he would come by the pastor's study and ask me did I need something to eat. He was always there for me when I needed help or had a question.

He is also someone I look up to as a godly husband, father, and grandfather. In his office, he would always have his wife, daughter, and grandchildren in there. He would always give them money and snacks. I would always see him interacting with them with a smile on his face. To be honest, I have never seen Mr. Bailey without a smile on his face. Every time we greeted one another, he always had a smile. His presence in my life has meant the world to me because I know I could count on him because he was there for me when I was trying to figure out my call to ministry.

Pastor Phillip Pointer, Sr., is another mentor that has impacted and influenced my life in a tremendous way. He is the man behind my ministry. I have always looked up to Pastor Pointer since I was a member of the Media Team. As I mentioned, I would be the only one paying attention to his sermons when he would get up to preach. I admired his confidence, his cadence, and his ability to articulate God's Word with power and clarity. However, although I admired his preaching and teaching, I have a great appreciation for the person. Pastor Pointer is a real as it gets. One of the things that made me appreciate and love him was when I saw him cry in the pulpit. I have been to church all my life, and

I have never witnessed a pastor/preacher cry in the pulpit. I thought to myself before hanging under his wing, I got to meet this guy. It is by God's providence and grace that I sit under his wing. Since 2020, I have been serving and hanging with Dr. Pointer, and I have learned a lot.

One of the important lessons he has taught me was the importance of being authentic. Sometimes in ministry, pastors and or preachers have the tendency of being "too churchy." They act this way to give off the impression that they are a pastor and or preacher. However, they act this way at the expense of not being human or real. That is not the case for Pastor Pointer. He is as real as it gets. He is not going to sugarcoat anything. Of course, he will always season truth with grace and love. He is not going to be fake with you. He taught me that I should not allow pastoring or preaching to make me someone that I am not.

Pastor Pointer characterizes studying and preparing to preach God's Word as an act of worship. It is because of him that I view studying God's Word the same way. I model my sermon preparation after him. From the expository preaching outline to writing a manuscript that is clear and precise came from his influence and impact. I take God's Word seriously because souls are at stake. He taught me to never play with God's Word and to never play with God's people. He says that preaching is not a time for performance. The reason I take preaching and teaching serious is because I want to please God; and I want to make Pastor Pointer proud. I do not want the time and wisdom that he has imparted in me to be in vain.

Another lesson that Pastor Pointer has mentored me on his radical generosity. I have traveled with Pastor Pointer to different cities and states and every time we go out, I

always see him paying for the bill. I always see him giving to somebody or to something. He has a generous heart. Another important lesson that he has taught was “if you don’t love God’s people then you do not need to pastor.” He taught me that pastoring should always be connected to people. The love that I have for God’s people was influenced by how he demonstrates his love for God’s people; and he shows it through his authenticity, preaching, teaching, serving, pastoring, and generosity.

The last important lessons that Pastor Pointer mentored me on was fasting, journaling, silence, and solitude. It was either 2017 or 2018 where the church did a communal fast. In this fast, we had different fasting options, but I decided to do the Daniel fast. I did the twenty-one-day fast where I did not eat meat, sugar, etc. This was my first time doing it, so I was excited and nervous. Starting out it was a struggle; but as time progress I could manage it. During this fast, I felt something different about myself. I felt healthier, more energize, and I felt my relationship getting stronger and intimate with God. I was introduced to fasting through Pastor Pointer and I saw the benefits of it spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically. It was because of this fast that I decided to make fasting apart of my discipline, especially when I feel like I am not hearing God clearly or I am allowing my flesh to get in the way of obeying God and being faithful to Him.

Pastor Pointer also taught me another way to pray to God and that was through journaling. Although communicating verbally is the way to pray to God, I did not know that journaling could be considered as a form of prayer. Journaling allowed me to write down what I felt like I could not articulate in words to God. As a younger man, I struggle with praying to God. I did not know what to say. At times, I was afraid to talk with God

because of my speech impediment. I felt that since I had a speech impediment that God could not hear or understand me. But learning the tool of journaling as another means to pray helped and strengthened my prayer life. When I started journaling my prayers, I would write them down first and then read them aloud. This discipline increased my confidence in knowing how to pray and learning another way to pray when I do not know how to muster up words.

The last discipline that I was mentored on was the discipline of silence and solitude. I was challenged to take time away from social media, television, and music. So, for several weeks, I took time away from social media and I drove in my car with no music. At first, it was awkward, but as the days passed I warmed up to it. I learned how noisy my life was which meant that I could not hear the voice of God. So, I replaced moments of watching television with reading my Bible, meditating, and praying over what I read for that day. I sat in silence in my front room. I walked outside to enjoy God's creation. I could experience God in usual but unique ways that I have never experienced him before. I learned that God has a still, small voice and the only way to hear His voice is through silence and solitude.

I am interested in mentorship because I want to be like the men who mentored me in my life. Mentorship is one of the key functions in the Church and local church.[3] I was able to benefit from this function of the church. It is my desire to help young men grow in their faith. I want to teach them how to read and interrupt the Bible correctly so that they can apply it correctly. One of the goals is to help them become better Christians,

[3] Jacki C. King, "Bridging Generations: The Essential Role of Mentorship in the Church," Church Answers, https://churchanswers.com/blog/bridging-generations-the-essential-role-of-mentorship-in-the-church/.

husbands, fathers, and brothers in Christ. I want to teach why relationships are important and why they matter. As an only child, I had the mindset that I had to do everything on my own. I did not want to depend on anybody. I wanted to figure out everything for myself. God had to remind me that God did not create me to live life in isolation. He created me for God-ordained relationships that would help me navigate life and would help me live the purpose and call that God has placed on my life.

Communal and familial support is another point of connection between my spiritual autobiography and contextual analysis. My mom had to move to Nashville, Tennessee with my uncle because she could not find a job in Little Rock, Arkansas because of her sickle cell anemia. Her disability always put her in the hospital for a lengthy period. Therefore, she could not sustain stable employment because of her illness. So, when she went to Nashville, Tennessee, to work for my uncle for the Sunday School Publishing Board, I stayed with my uncle and aunt, Paul and Marcia Scott. They treated me like I was their own. They exposed me to foods that I thought I would never like. Both my uncle and aunt were educators, so learning was non-negotiable. They were also minster of music and lead choir director for Pilgrim Progress Missionary Baptist Church, my childhood church. I developed a passion for music and singing because of them. I had to sing in the choir although I did not want to. On Sunday mornings, my auntie would blast Gospel music and come in and wake us up and would always say, "This is the day that the Lord has made and we need to get up and rejoice" (Ps. 118:24). I developed a sound for music because of my uncle and aunt. I do not know the notes on a keyboard, nor do I have the gift of singing lead, but it was through them that I know what sounds good and what sounds bad.

When my mom passed away in 2019, my cousin, Erika “Micki” Cherry allowed me to stay with her and her three sons. My cousin played an integral role in helping me navigate the passing of my mom. Although I had different people and options, I could have utilized food and shelter, I felt that it was best to stay with her because of the close relationship she had with my mom. I felt more comfortable with her. She played a motherly role in my life, and I knew she would be able to help me because she was raising three boys of her own. She prayed for me. We would have weekly or bi-weekly check ins to see how I was holding up. She was a huge support in my life during this season. She was compassionate and caring, and it is because of her presence that I could continue to move forward without my mom. It is like she was a mini version of my mom.

When I moved back from Memphis, Tennessee, to Little Rock, Arkansas, in January 2020, I did not know what my next move was after I gave God my “yes” to ministry. I did not have a place to stay. I did not have a job although I was looking for one. So, Justin and Sharita Bilson, my close friends allowed me to stay with them until I got on my feet. My plan was to stay with them for three months. However, that did not happen. I was supposed to start working at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, but when COVID-19 was at its apex, it resulted in all colleges and universities shutting down and going virtual. This was a trying season of my faith because I thought that since I moved back in obedience to God, it would have opened this door for me, but that was not the case. For majority of the 2020 year, I was staying with the Bilson’s; and they were supportive of me. During my stay with the Bilson’s, one of my mentors, Kevin Noble helped me pay my phone bill and car insurance. So, while God was using this seasoning to develop me and to help me experience God and not the idea of God, He surrounded me

with a community of people to help me meet my needs until I could move into my apartment in January 2021.

St. Mark Baptist Church supported me in a variety of ways. They paid for my tuition at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. They paid for my books in some of the semesters as I was matriculating through school. Kevin Noble, who is a deacon at St. Mark, helped me by paying for my books in some of the semesters, too.

Although St. Mark's Youth Ministry has a partnership with two programs that provides help and services for younger children, we do not have a ministry that provides help and services for young men ages eighteen through thirty. This age range is characterized by society to be an age range where they should be able to provide for themselves. However, that is not always the case, specifically in my case. Bureau of Labor Statistics records (during the COVID-19 Pandemic) that Black men has the highest unemployment rate and that there was a large race gap in employment before COVID-19.[4] Brookings states, "Prior to March 2020, Black men consistently had among the highest unemployment rates of Black and white workers."[5] St. Mark had a restoration project that help supported its members during COVID-19. I believe my experience could create a program where, if another pandemic happens or if something as simple as losing a job, I can create a program that can pair stable families with young men who need help and assistance.

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[4] United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Department of Labor," U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, https://www.bls.gov/web/empsit/cpseea04.htm.

[5] Richard V. Reeves, Sarah Nzau, and Ember Smith, "The Challenges Facing Black Men – and the Case for Action," Brookings, https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-challenges-facing-black-men-and-the-case-for-action/.

My speech impediment is another connection between my spiritual autobiography and contextual analysis. The reason I struggle with accepting the call to the ministry is because I thought you had to be an eloquent speaker. For most of my life, I allowed this statement to keep me from opportunities I believed God sent my way for me to exercise the gift God put in me. There are times today when I am nervous about speaking in front of people or meeting new people because I do not want them to see my speech impediment. At times, I feel like I am not called to preach because of my speech impediment. Every time I would mention my speech impediment as an excuse to not speak when I was younger, the rebuttal was the life of Moses. In Exodus chapter four, Moses tells YHWH that he could not speak. God's response to Moses was "Who made man's mouth?" Although I believe this to be biblically true, I had a hard time believing God could use someone with a speech impediment. However, I thank God for men like my childhood pastor and my current pastor, Drs. Gerald Parker, Sr., and Phillip Pointer, Sr. Both men have speech impediments, and I witnessed God use them in powerful ways. They have shown me that when you give God your weakness, God's grace and power is sufficient. God's power can overcome my inadequacies and insufficiencies when I yield myself to God's Spirit.

I believe my experience with my speech impediment could lead the church to creating some type of toastmaster class that give people the opportunity to grow as a public speaker. For our children, we have Easter where they give Easter speeches. What do we have in place for adults? There are some adults who are afraid to speak publicly because of a disability that plagues them.

In conclusion, as I observe who I am and where I serve, the intent of this doctoral project is to investigate if Black males in between the ages of eighteen to twenty-four were to go through a training on public speaking and its effectiveness, then they will be more confident and comfortable engaging in public speaking and public ministry activities.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

The problem statement is that eighteen to twenty-two-year-old African American males lack confidence in communication and writing. Therefore, I hypothesize that if eighteen to twenty-two-year-old males engaged in a six-week course on communication, then they will be more confident in speaking and writing. The scriptural foundation for this problem, hypothesis, and research project is Exodus 4:10-17, which states:

> But Moses said to the LORD, "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue." Then the LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak. But he said, "Oh, my Lord, please send someone else." Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses and he said, "Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know he can speak well. Behold, he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth, and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what to do. He shall speak for you to the people, and he shall be your mouth, and you shall be as God to him. And take what's in your hand this staff, with which you shall do the signs."[1]

Introduction

My speech impediment caused me to struggle with communicating and writing. My confidence level was not what it needed to be when it came to certain college courses like public speaking and writing. I did not do my best because I was insecure and

[1] Biblical citations are from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted, Exodus 4:10-17.

anxious. I denied speaking engagements that were offered to me because I was afraid of someone finding out that I had a speech impediment. As a child, I was often ridiculed and maligned because of how bad it was. The embarrassment and shame traveled with me into my adult life. However, I realize that one of the ways to grow my confidence in speaking and writing is by doing it. What I realized was that on the other side of doing it is where my confidence was.

Communication and writing skills are recognized as an integral component of many colleges and universities. Public speaking courses are generally offered to give students the space to grow their confidence in public speaking. Rhetoric writing courses are offered as well to help grow in writing. However, for African Americans, that may not be the case. Black males sometimes lack the confidence to public speaking because of social complexities and stereotypes that undermine their ability and confidence in speaking and writing.[2] When Black males live in the social complexities and stereotypes that have been given to us is when they prevent themselves from growing and gaining confidence to stand tall and speak and to sit down and write. The lack of confidence is a valid feeling, but it can often be used as an excuse like Moses gave his excuses to God when God was calling him to speak on behalf of Him. However, for every excuse, God had a solution. My solution is a six-week course that allows Black males to cultivate the confidence to speak and write.

[2] Deric M. Greene and Felicia R. Walker, "Recommendations to Public Speaking Instructors for the Negotiation of Code-Switching Practices among Black English-Speaking African American Students," *The Journal of Negro Education* 73, no. 4 (2004): 435–442, https://doi.org/10.2307/4129627.

Overview of the Biblical Text

Exodus 4:10-16 is a dialogue between God and Moses. After God gives Moses signs and miracles to show him that He would be with him and the power that would be demonstrated through him, Moses gives God another excuse. The excuse was he was slow in speech. The phrase "I am slow of speech" literally means heavy of mouth.[3] Although Moses' self-assessment is true, God is not pleased because of Moses' lack of faith. God gave Moses enough circumstantial evidence to believe, but Moses was preoccupied with what he could not do. In response to Moses' excuse, God responds with a rhetorical question about Him being the Creator of humankind and God's ability to control humankind's condition. After God's rhetorical question, he tells Moses to go back to Egypt to Pharaoh and assures him that He will be with his mouth and will tell him what to say.

After God's assurances, Moses is still reluctant. He goes from being preoccupied with what he could not do to telling God to send someone else. God was not pleased and provided another solution, but God wanted Moses to do what He called Moses to do: to speak on God's behalf and on behalf of the children of Israel. Although God provided Aaron, Moses' brother, Moses was still responsible for speaking. God reassures him that He will be with their (Moses and Aaron) mouths and will tell them what to do. Moses' excuses did not abdicate him from his responsibility. God told Moses that he would be like God to Aaron, solidifying Moses' role in saving Israel from slavery and oppression in Egypt.

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[3] R. Alan Cole, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 2 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 56.

Themes

The themes that I will explore are Moses's speech impediment, his lack of confidence, his reluctance to do what God was calling him to, and God's solution to help bolster Moses's confidence so that He can do what God called him to do. I will use these themes to compare African American males' lack of confidence in speaking and writing and how the six-week course can be a possible solution to help bolster their confidence.

Exegesis of Exodus

Exodus is the second book of the Torah. The word Exodus is taken from the Septuagint and the Greek now *exodos*, which means "going out" or "departure." The theme of the Book of Exodus is redemption. Exodus speaks of a covenant-keeping God who has heard the cry of His people who had endured over 400 years of slavery. Exodus speaks of God (who reveals Himself as YHWH) coming to rescue His chosen people (Israel) out of slavery in Egypt. The story of Israel's salvation includes Pharaoh (oppressor), Moses (liberator), signs and (plagues), deliverance (Red Sea), a forty-year journey through the wilderness, the receiving of the Ten Commandments and the consecration of the Tabernacle that God commanded Moses and Israel to build so that God's glory could rest on it.

There were other names that the book of Exodus was known for. The commonly known title for the second book in the Torah is Shemot. This comes from the opening words ve'elleh shemot. This was a common practice in Ancient Near Eastern culture where they named their literary work by its initial word or words.[4] Another ancient

[4] Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 122.

Hebrew name for the book of Exodus was sefer yetsi'at mitsrayim, which means "The Book of Departure from Egypt." This was the essential theme of the book.

The Book of Exodus should be treated as a historical book.[5] The events that took place are real events that happened to real people. Although the book has a mixture of literary genres such as story, poetry, liturgy, and law, the scope should not be limited to those lenses. The proper lens that should be used when reading the Book of Exodus must be a historical one. The book presents itself as history and must be accepted as a true account of the history of God's saving power through Moses in the life of God's people.[6]

The authorship of Exodus is attributed to Moses. However, some biblical scholars deny that Moses authored the book. Some believe that several documents from the book were put together centuries after Moses' death.[7] During the Enlightenment Period around the seventeenth or eighteenth century, Moses' authorship came into question. The philosophers of this period rejected traditional social, religious, and political ideas using rationalism.[8] They used this same concept to question or undermine Moses by writing the first five books of the Old Testament. Higher critical theorists believe that Moses did not write the first five books because they believed that there was no writing in the days of Moses. However, that is not the case. Ostrowski says that biblical scholars during the nineteenth century questioned Moses' authorship of the first five books of the Bible. He

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[5] Tremper Longman, III, *How to Read Exodus* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 60.

[6] Philip Graham Ryken and R. Kent Hughes, *Exodus: Saved for God's Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 38.

[7] Walter A Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, "Exodus, Book of, " in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 74.

[8] Merriam Webster, "s.v. Enlightenment," Merriam Webster, www.merriam-Webster.com.

says that the early church father, Jerome Ezra, wrote the Pentateuch.[9] However, I disagree. I ascribe to Stewart's sentiments, which suggest that writing was practiced centuries before the day of Moses, and since Moses was raised in Egyptian culture, he could write the first five books of the Bible.[10] Traditionally, both Jews and Christians recognize that Moses is the author and that he wrote the book after the exodus from Egypt (add chapter, verse). The audience that the book is addressed to is the people of Israel who were living in the wilderness on their way to Canaan (the land that God promised Abraham).[11]

The historical background of Exodus is connected to the ending of the Book of Genesis which ends with the death of Joseph in Egypt. The connection was deliberate. This connection favors the validity of Exodus being a part of the Pentateuch. In the Pentateuch, there are five major themes: God's promise to the patriarchs, the exodus, God's self-revelation in covenant and law, wilderness wandering, and entrance into the Promised Land. Three out of the five themes are given a great amount of space in Exodus.[12]

Exodus 1:1-5 gives the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with his family. There was a new king who did not know Joseph's people and decided to oppress

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[9] Donald Ostrowski, "Did Moses Write the Pentateuch?," in *Who Wrote That? Authorship Controversies from Moses to Sholokhov* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020), 14–38, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctvqc6jg2.6.

[10] Don Stewart, "Why Do Some People Reject the Idea That Moses Wrote the First Five Books of the Old Testament?" Blue Letter Bible, https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don_stewart/don_stewart_679.cfm.

[11] John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay, *Ultimate Bible Guide* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2016), 12.

[12] Cole, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary*, 167.

the Israelite people. Israel's bondage in slavery was for 430 years.[13] When God heard His people's cry, God decided to reveal Himself to Moses so that He could prepare him to go back to Egypt and tell Pharaoh to let His people go. For the first ten chapters, all events took place in Egypt.

Egypt was a polytheistic religion. It believed in many gods. It did not believe in the one True God, which is why God wanted Moses to liberate God's people so that they could know who the real God was. Therefore, God was strategic when God performed the plagues in Egypt. The first plague was turning the Nile into blood, which was connected to the Egyptian god, Hapi. The plagues dealing with the frog and cattle were viewed as an attack on Hekat and Hathor. The ninth plague was directed toward the sun god Ra. The last, the death of the firstborn, was an attack on Pharaoh.[14] From Exodus Chapter Eleven through Exodus 18:27, the people of God went from Egypt to the mountain where God first had a conversation with Moses, beginning in Exodus Chapter Three. From Chapters Nineteen to Forty, all the content mentioned takes place at Mount Sinai. However, it is important to note the time setting of Exodus. There must be a distinction made between when the narrative was cast and the historical background. The names of the Egyptian kings are not given. There is no account of how long Joseph's death was. No extra-biblical documentation refers to Israel being in Egypt, the Exodus, or the Canaan conquest.[15]

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[13] Roy E. Gingrich, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Memphis, TN: Riverside Printing, 2001), 90.

[14] T. Michael Kennedy, "Egypt, Plagues of," in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, John D. Barry et al., eds. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 176.

[15] Sarna*, Exodus*, 29.

When we look at Exodus, several themes receive great emphasis. Salvation, Freedom from Bondage (Ex. 6:6), is the fundamental theme that underlies the book. The Israelites were under Egyptian oppression, serving Pharaoh. However, God heard their cries and came down to deliver them through Moses so that they could serve Him. The Israelites are portrayed as having no chance to save themselves. Therefore, only God had the power to deliver them out of bondage into freedom so that they could be representatives of Him to the surrounding nations. Real Knowledge of God (Ex. 6:6-8) is another theme that highlights this book. The Lord repeats the statement "I am the LORD" on numerous occasions. A Covenant People (Ex. 6:7), which was the people of Israel are the people God chose to identify as His people so that they could be a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6). A Promise Land (Ex. 6:8) was the land that was promised to the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) successive generation. In Egypt, Israel was without a land to call their own. God delivered them so that He could take them to the promised land, a land flowing with milk and honey.[16]

There is a wide range of opinions about the events that are recorded in Exodus. The historical events in the book of Exodus have been debated because of the lack of external evidence. Many of the events that took place in Exodus happened in the desert, and some camps and structures did not leave a lasting impression for archeologists to study.[17] Gathering historical data has been an issue because of the distance in language and culture of the ancient texts, and the Ancient Near East (ANE) had different ideas

[16] Douglas K. Stuart, "Exodus," in *The New American Commentary*, vol. 2 (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2006), 55.

[17] Bennett, "Exodus, Book Of, Critical Issues," 122.

about historical events and history.[18] When they recorded history, they did not record an accurate account.[19]

Some scholars disagree with the historicity of the book. Some hold that the events that occurred in Exodus never happened.[20] Scholar Gosta Ahlstrom argued in 1986 that the exodus never happened and that the Israelites were Canaanites.[21] However, some internal arguments for the historicity need to be considered. The biblical text provides evidence for the events recorded in the book. The internal arguments favor an early date for the exodus around the fifteenth century BC. The evidence for it is 2 Kings 6:1. The time from the exodus to Solomon's temple is around 480 years.[22] Although there are differences of opinion, proving the historicity and the reliability should not be the primary focus. John Duran says that the subject of the book should not be the primary interest because whether it is not true, early dating or late dating, the theological message of the book does not change.[23]

The literary structure of Exodus is outlined in two types of ways because of its difficulty to discern. The outlines are Israel in Egypt (1:1–13:16), Israel in the Wilderness (13:17–18:27), and Israel at Sinai (19:1–40:38). Others focus on content in outlining Exodus: Deliverance from Egypt and Journey to Sinai (1:1–18:27), Covenant at Sinai

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[18] Stuart, "Exodus," 145.

[19] William Johnstone, *Exodus* (Sheffield, UK: JSOT Press, 1990), 11.

[20] James K. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition* (New York, NY: New York Oxford University Press, 1999).

[21] Gösta Werner Ahlström, *Who Were the Israelites?* (Lincoln, UK: Eisenbrauns, 1986), 65.

[22] Bennett, "Exodus, Book Of, Critical Issues."

[23] John I. Durham, *Exodus,* vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2015), ProQuest Ebook Central.

(19:1–24:18), Instructions for Tabernacle and Worship (25:1, 31:18), Breach and Renewal of Covenant (32:1–34:35), Building the Tabernacle (35:1–40:38).[24] Exodus has a variety of literary forms. Those genres are poetry, covenant texts, and legal materials.[25]

Exegesis of Exodus 3:1-4:9

To understand the context of Exodus 4:10-16, we must consider the preceding passages, Exodus 3-4:9. In Exodus 3:1-17, Moses was keeping Jethro, his father-in-law's sheep, near Mt. Horeb, the mountain of God. While Moses was tending to the sheep, an angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in a burning bush. Moses was intrigued by the burning bush and decided to turn to see this extraordinary experience. The Lord saw Moses turn aside to see the burning bush, and then God spoke to him from the bush. God calls Moses' name twice. Moses responds, and God tells him not to come near. He tells Moses that the place where He is standing is holy ground. God reveals Himself as the God of Moses' ancestors. In response to God's revelation, Moses hides his face out of fear because he was afraid to look at God.

God continues the conversation about seeing the oppression of His people. God is calling and preparing Moses to return to Egypt to confront Pharaoh to let His people go. Moses interjects and asks God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" (Ex. 3:11). God responds by telling Moses that He was with him. The sign that God will use to confirm His presence with Moses is when Moses

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[24] David S. Dockery, ed., *Holman Bible Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers. 1992).

[25] Eugene H. Merrill, "The Pentateuch," in *Holman Concise Bible Commentary*, David S. Dockery, ed. (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1998), 21.

brings the people out of slavery to serve Him on Mt. Horeb. Moses gives God another excuse, but God provides the name that Moses is to tell the people. Additionally, God reminds Moses that He will be with him, and He will give his people favor in the sight of the Egyptians (Ex. 3:12).

In Exodus 4:1-9, Moses gives more excuses to God, and God gives two signs. One of the signs was when the staff became a serpent, and when Moses caught it by the tail, it became a staff. The other sign that God used was when He told Moses to put his hand inside his cloak, and when he did, it became white like snow. The disease that Moses had was leprosy. God then tells Moses to put it back in his cloak, and when he did, his hand was restored. Moses was still reluctant, and God gave him another sign, and that sign was that the Nile became blood.

Form, Structure, and Setting of Exodus 4:10:17

Scholars suggest that this is an uneasy composite dealing with further protest by Moses to do what God was calling him to do because of his insufficiencies and inadequacies. The complaint for the redactor becomes the basis for two answers: God's presence and Aaron being used as a spokesman to the people on behalf of Moses. It is suggested that the two answers do not complement one another, which is why some translations seek to link both answers.[26]

The sources, Jahwist, Elohist, Deuteronomist, and Priestly, do not offer any help because of the absence of source-critical clues. Since there are no source critical clues, it confuses the problem. Some scholars give credit to E, but some give it to J. Most

[26] Durham, *Exodus.*

commentators refer to the secondary nature of verses thirteen through sixteen. The oldest version of Moses' protest against God may have ended with Moses surrendering when God reassured His presence with him. It is suggested that the verses about Aaron were added to provide a solution for Moses' protest.[27]

Aaron is called both Moses' brother and a Levite, which symbolizes that Aaron would be set apart and that God's presence would be with him. The postscript about the staff may have been included to reaffirm the authority that God gave Moses in verses one through nine and what God will do with the staff.[28]

Exodus 4:10

Exodus 4:10 opens with Moses addressing God about his eloquence. This verse uses both the name Lord (yhwh) and the title Lord ('adonay). The first Lord is God's personal name. The second Lord is a title of respect.[29] This phrase that Moses stated is full of force. This phrase was used by other biblical characters (Gn. 43:20; Nm. 12:11; Jo. 7:8).[30] Moses goes on to say that he is not eloquent in speech. He pleads to God that he is not a good spokesman. One commentary says, "He was a great philosopher, statesman, and divine, and yet no orator; a man of a clear head, great thought, and solid judgment, but had not a voluble tongue, or ready utterance, and therefore he thought himself unfit to speak before great men about great affairs, and in danger of being run down by the

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[27] Durham, *Exodus,* 60.

[28] Durham, *Exodus,* 65.

[29] Noel D. Osborn and Howard A. Hatton, *A Handbook on Exodus* (New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 1999), 100.

[30] H. D. M Spence-Jones, ed., "Exodus," *The Pulpit Commentary,* vol. 1 (New York, NY: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1909), 43.

Egyptians."[31] The speech defect of Moses is widely interpreted as stammering. Some scholars think otherwise. Levin suggests, "Moses' reluctance to speak, including speaking to a rock, as commanded in Numbers 20:8-11, can be interpreted as humility (Ex. 3:11, Num. 12:3)."[32] Feldman's article "Moses in Midian," According to Philo:

> Philo (*De Vita Moses* 1.83) is clearly aware of the problem involved in Moses' lack of eloquence; whereas Josephus (*Ant.* 2.272), quite clearly for apologetic reasons, omits the biblical references (Exod. 4:10, 6:12) to Moses' speech impediment, Philo asserts that Moses declared that he was feeble of voice and slow of tongue; but he adds two explanations, such as we do not find in the Bible, that will excuse this impediment, namely that he was tongue-tied apparently out of sheer shock, and since God speaking to him,, and secondly that he considered human eloquence to be dumbness as compared with God's.[33]

There is another direction that some scholars suggest. Rashbam, Luzzatto, and other recent commentators have preferred the views of other ancient exegetes that Moses claimed to have forgotten his Egyptian, to be eloquent, unskilled in debating, or the like.[34] I do not agree with those who agree with Moses' lack of eloquence because of his speech impediment. I agree with the majority that Moses' reluctance was because he could not speak. According to a Jewish tradition, Moses had difficulty pronouncing the labials (b, v, m, ph, p.).[35] Moses is giving God another objection because of his inadequacy.

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[31] Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 78.

[32] S. Levin, "The Speech Defect of Moses," *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 85, no. 10 (October): 632–33, https://doi.org/10.1177/014107689208501015.

[33] Louis H. Feldman, "Moses in Midian, According to Philo," *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 21, no. 2 (2002): 1–20, https://doi.org/10.1353/sho.2002.0142.

[34] Jeffry H. Tigay, "'Heavy of Mouth' and 'Heavy of Tongue' on Moses' Speech Difficulty," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* no. 231 (1978): 57–67, https://doi.org/10.2307/1356746.

[35] Spence-Jones, "Exodus," 45.

Exodus 4:11

Looking at verse eleven, the Lord responds to Moses. The Lord's response refers to his sovereignty over humanity. He is using a series of rhetorical questions to show that He is the one who determines man's abilities or disabilities.[36] The "Who has made man's mouth?" may be understood as "Who gives man his mouth?" (TEV), "Who gives man speech?" (TAN), or "Who made humans [or, people] so that they can talk?" The "Who makes him dumb (mute ESV), or deaf is changed to "deaf or dumb (TEV) because of the more natural order in English. The New International Version renders it "Who makes him deaf or mute?" The focus is on the word "dumb" or "mute."[37] The Lord is reminding Moses that He is fully aware of Moses' inability to speak. Therefore, God reassures Moses that He is the Creator of humanity and controls humanity.

The words "seeing" and "blind" are used to add more emphasis to God's ability to control humanity. It is suggested that it may be easier to manage these terms in two parallel questions: "Who gives sight or makes him blind?" The word for seeing means "clear-sighted" (NEB), or "keen-sighted" (TOT). There is an alternative translation for these two questions. They are "Who causes a person to be deaf or unable to talk? Who causes a person to be able to see or be blind? "Is it not I, the Lord?" It is a negative rhetorical question that demands an

[36] John D. Hannah, "Exodus," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, eds. (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1:114.

[37] Osborn and Hatton, *A Handbook on Exodus*, 77.

affirmative answer. A better translation would be "It is I, the Lord!" or "I, the Lord am the one who does these things," or even "I, Yahweh, am the one who does these things."[38]

Exodus 4:12

Verse twelve begins with a command. "Now therefore go" is an idiomatic expression for "So, get going [or, moving].[39] Verse twelve also says that the Lord will be with Moses' mouth and will teach him what to say. The verb "to teach" introduces the root of the noun "Torah." There is emphatic use of the first-person pronoun in the Lord's response to Moses.[40] The phrase "and teach you what you shall speak does not suggest section instruction in advance, but it suggests that the LORD will tell Moses what to say at the right time."[41]

Exodus 4:13

In verse thirteen, Moses tells the Lord to send someone else. The NIV renders Moses' request as "Please, my lord, send by you will send." This clause is an idiomatic expression that means "I don't want to do it. However, it is worded

[38] Osborn and Hatton, *A Handbook on Exodus*, 88.

[39] Osborn and Hatton, *A Handbook on Exodus*, 89.

[40] William Johnstone, *Exodus 1-19* (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys Publishing Incorporated, 2014), Ch. 6.

[41] Osborn and Hatton, *A Handbook on Exodus*, 95.

as neutral and non-offensive.[42] Other translations of this clause are, "send, please, by a hand you will send" and "whomever you will send."[43][44]

Exodus 4:14

The Lord's anger was kindled because of Moses' reluctance to go. However, the Lord provides a solution for Moses. He tells him about his brother Aaron and how he can speak. "Is there not Aaron?" (Ex. 4:14) is another negative rhetorical question that gives an obvious answer. "The anger of the Lord was kindled" means that the nose of YHWH became hot. Some languages retain a better description of God's anger toward Moses: "When he (YHWH) heard Moses' words the Lord's heart became hot," or "The Lord's heart burned against Moses. Other examples are "to have a cut heart" or "to have a swollen heart."[45] The word brother can be understood as 'fellow clansman' or even 'fellow Israelite' (cf. Lv. 19:17). Your brother can mean either the son of the same parents or a distant relative.[46]

"The Levite" was used to describe the tribe that Aaron came from. However, one commentary suggests that this phrase seems an odd way for one member of the tribe of Levi to be described to another member of the same one.[47] Scholars suggest that referring

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[42] Stuart, "Exodus."

[43] Durham, *Exodus.*

[44] Harold W. Attridge, *Society of Biblical Literature*: *The HarperCollins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version, with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books* (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 2006).

[45] Osborn, and Hatton, *A Handbook on Exodus*, Chapter 7.

[46] Osborn, and Hatton, *A Handbook on Exodus*, 105.

to Aaron's tribe could be understood as a reference rather than highlighting his descent. It also could reflect the priestly role that will later be assigned to him.[48] Another scholar suggests that it is unclear why Aaron was mentioned this way. However, three possibilities were offered: "(1) The Levites may have already been an educated elite (Sarna 1991:22); (2) the narrator is reminding the reader of the mediatorial role that the Levites were to fulfill (Enns 2000:112–113); (3) it is a wordplay on the idea of "joined to," which is what "Levi" means in Hebrew (Cassuto 1967:50)."[49]

"And behold" means "In fact" or "As a matter of fact. "He is coming out to meet you" is present progressive. It means that "he is now coming to meet you" or "he is already on his way (NEB). "And when he sees you he will be glad in his heart means that he will be glad to see Moses when they meet. The word glad is expressed with figurative expression using the heart, live or viscera."[50]

Exodus 4:15

In verse fifteen, the Lord tells Moses that he will speak to Aaron, and he will put words in his mouth. Furthermore, the Lord tells Moses that he will be with both his and Aaron's mouth and will teach them both what to do. Aaron will be an oracle to Moses' role as God.[51] "And you shall speak to him" is an

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[47] Cole, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary*, 52.

[48] Osborn and Hatton, *A Handbook on Exodus*, 116.

[49] John Oswalt and Alan Ross, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Genesis, Exodus*, vol. 1, Philip W. Comfort, ed. (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 51.

[50] Osborn and Hatton, *A Handbook on Exodus*, 120.

[51] Attridge, *Society of Biblical Literature*, Chapter 3.

explanation of the plan to be followed. “You shall speak can be rendered as “You can speak” (TEV) or “You are to speak” (NAB). “And put the words in his mouth” literally means to “tell him the words that he is to say.” The clause “And I will be with your mouth and with his mouth” is the same expression in verse twelve. God is promising to help both speak. “And I will teach you both what to do” uses the second plural in both cases. The word “teach” suggests more than telling Moses and Aaron what to do. It implies some instruction in advance.[52]

Exodus 4:16

The Lord says that Aaron will speak for Moses to the people, and Moses will be as God to him. “And he shall be a mouth for you” is used as a metaphor, and “you shall be to him as God” is a simile. Both clauses use the same construction in the Hebrew. The word “mouth” means to be a spokesman (TEV) or “mouth piece” (NJB). It is suggested that “mouth” may also be rendered as a simile along with the second clause.[53] The clause “you shall be like God to him” is not suggesting that Aaron will worship Moses or that Moses is God. Rather, it suggests that God will tell Moses what to say, and then Moses will tell Aaron or Aaron to consider the commands God will give Moses.[54]

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[52] Osborn and Hatton, *A Handbook on Exodus*, 125.

[53] Osborn and Hatton, *A Handbook on Exodus*, 130.

[54] John D. Barry et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), Chapter 3.

Exodus 4:17

The Lord concludes this section by instructing Moses to take the staff in his hands. This will be the staff that he will use to do the signs. The word "signs" is to be understood as miracles. "Signs" can also be rendered as "wonderful acts," "marvelous deeds that amaze people," or "mouth-opening events."[55]

Conclusion

This passage will be foundational to my doctoral project because it will help me discover Black males' symptoms when it comes to communicating and writing. Moses gave God objections. Moses was reluctant to God. However, God has a solution for every one of Moses' objections and reluctance. His brother Aaron was the one solution outside of the demonstration of God's power and sovereignty. Aaron was the key to helping Moses do what God called him to do. I believe my project can benefit Black males like Aaron did to Moses. I want to create and implement a project that consists of "Aarons" who have the confidence and competency to speak to help the Moses' who lack the confidence and competency to speak and write well.

[55] Osborn and Hatton, *A Handbook on Exodus*, 130.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

The historical discussion for helping eighteen to twenty-two-year-old African American males grow their confidence in speaking and writing well is based on the life and work of Philip Melanchthon. Melanchthon was a German reformer and theologian who worked alongside Martin Luther during the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century. Melanchthon played a major role in shaping the Lutheran movement. He was the second man after Martin Luther and served under his tutelage.[1] Melanchthon was the author of the *Confessio Augustana.* He was responsible for the new structure of theological training.[2] He was mainly responsible for writing the Heidelberg Catechism.[3] He was also known for his work in education, helping reform the educational system in Germany. Melanchthon was known as the teacher of Germany. He convinced authorities that theologians should be able to study the Bible in its original languages. He also

[1] Van Wyk and W. C. Ignatius, "Philipp Melanchthon: A Short Introduction," *HTS Theological Studies* 73, no. 1 (2017): 1-8, https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i1.4672.

[2] U. Köpf, "Martin Luthers Beitrag zur Universitätsreform," *Lutherjahrbuch* 80 (2010): 31–59.

[3] J. Ehmann, "Von Breslau in die Pfalz – die Wege des Zacharias Ursinus," M. Heimbucher, C. Schneider-Harpprecht and A. Siller, eds., in *Zugänge zum Heidelberger Katechismus: Geschichte, Themen, Unterricht, Neukirchener Theologie, Neukirchen-Vluyn* (Hartford, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 22-42.

transformed the whole system of theological training.[4] It is suggested that he introduced many of the subjects that were the cornerstone for theological training worldwide.[5]

However, Melanchthon was never ordained as a preacher. It is suggested that he was shy of preaching because of a slight speech impediment. Although he was shy, he made significant contributions to conveying the faith through teaching and proclamation. He became proficient in Greek and Hebrew. In his contribution to the Wittenberg Reform Movement, his work served as a resource for preachers across Germany and Europe. His contributions served as models for professors at universities to help train new pastors. Melanchthon taught students how to preach and teach and how to communicate effectively despite his slight speech impediment.[6]

The work and ministry that Philip Melanchthon did was with the partnership of men like Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Ulrich Zwingli.[7] He contributed to movements like the Protestant Reformation and the Wittenberg Reform Movement. Despite Melanchthon having a speech impediment, it was stated that he wrote speeches to help him and others deliver speeches. He did not allow his speech impediment to keep him from being a well-renowned speaker and writer. His writing ability empowered him to be a great orator. This chapter will evaluate the life, education, views, work, and ministry of Philip Melanchthon. Within this research, one will discover the significant contributions

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[4] Van Wyk and W. C. Ignatius, "Philipp Melanchthon: A Short Introduction," *HTS Theological Studies* 73, no. 1 (2017): 1-8, https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i1.4672.

[5] M. Beyer, "Philipp Melanchthon – Humanismus und evangelische Theologie," *Luther* 82, no.3 (2017): 163–180.

[6] Robert A. Kolb, "Philip Melanchthon: Confessor of the Faith," The Lutheran Witness, https://witness.lcms.org/2010/philip-melanchthon-confessor-of-the-faith-2-2010/.

[7] Van Wyk and W. C. Ignatius, "Philipp Melanchthon: A Short Introduction," *HTS Theological Studies* 73, no. 1 (2017): 1-8, https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i1.4672.

of Melanchthon and how his writing of speeches and his curriculums helped him and others deliver speeches and sermons effectively.

A Biographical Life of Philip Melanchthon

Early Years

Philip Melanchthon was born February 16, 1497, as Philip Schwartzerdt (literally, black earth, humanist name) at Bretten, an administrative center in the Palatinate.[8] He was the son of George Schwarzerdt, who was a gunsmith and armorer to the Prince Elector, and Barbara Reuter, who was the daughter of the prominent Bretten burgher Hans Reuter and his wife Elisabeth Reuchlin. George was born in Heidelberg and was known for his "mastery of gunnery and skilled in forging lightweight, durable armor."[9] His skills elevated him into the "office of electoral master of armorer." Barbara came from a wealthy merchant family of Reuter.[10] She was the best-known humanist who served the study of biblical Hebrew and the freedom of scientific research. His grandparents raised Philip. He was the oldest of four.[11]

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[8] Van Wyk and W. C. Ignatius, "Philipp Melanchthon: A Short Introduction," *HTS Theological Studies* 73, no. 1 (2017): 1-8, https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i1.4672.

[9] John Schofield, *Philip Melanchthon and the English Reformation*, New York, NY: Routledge, 2017.

[10] Scott Keith, "Meeting Melanchthon: The Early Years," 1517 Christ for You, https://www.1517.org/articles/meeting-melanchthon-the-early-years.

[11] Horst F. Rupp, "Philipp Melanchthon: 1497–1560," *Profiles of Famous Educator* 26 (1996): 610-621.

Adult Years

In 1520, Melanchthon married Katharina Krapp. She was the daughter of Hans Krapp who was the mayor of Wittenberg. It is suggested that Martin Luther arranged the marriage because of Melanchthon's lack of physical attraction. Luther believed that Melanchthon would not find a wife because of his appearance. Melanchthon and his wife had four children. Their names were Anna, Philip, Georg, and Magdalena.[12] For Anna, Melanchthon arranged her marriage with one of his favorite students. However, the student became an abusive husband to Anna and Anna died after birthing her sixth child. Magdalena's marriage was not arranged. But she did marry one of her father's students. Magdalena and her husband built a house behind her father's so that he could have a "cheerful family atmosphere."[13]

Education

Following Melanchthon's father's and grandfather's death, his grandmother and family moved to Pforzheim. He attended a grammar school where he excelled in both Latin and Greek. Because of his accomplishments, he received the Greek form of his surname in 1509. In 1509, Melanchthon moved on to the University of Heidelberg. He fulfilled the requirements of the university and attained his bachelor's in Classic Arts in 1511. In the same year, he completed his first publications, which consisted of poems. In 1512, he moved on to Tubingen, where he pursued studies in scholastic philosophy. He

[12] Joshua J. Mark, "Philip Melanchthon," World History Encyclopedia, https://www.worldhistory.org/Philip_Melanchthon/.

[13] Joseph Stump, "Philip Melanchthon and His Friendship with Luther," Place For Truth, https://www.placefortruth.org/blog/philip-melanchthon-and-his-friendship-luther#:~:text=Philip%20Melanchthon%20was%20a%20brilliant.

was prevented from getting a master because of his youth and because of his relationship with Reuchlin (his uncle). In 1514, he attained his Master of Arts from Tubingen University. This accomplishment was achieved through the relationships he developed at Tubingen University.[14] It is also suggested that Melanchthon received his PhD.[15]

His early intellectual formation was humanism, which shaped his theological perspective. When he arrived at the University of Wittenberg, he matured in Christian philosophy, including "liberal arts, epistemology, Aristotelian dialectic, rhetoric, and ethics."[16]

Melanchthon's Early Influences on Education

Melanchthon's grandfather ensured that he got the best education possible. He made sure that he received an early education in Latin. His grandfather hired Johannes Unger to be his tutor and his brother, George. Another influence on his education was Johnannes Reuchlin. He was "a famous Humanist and Hebrew Scholar," and he was Melanchthon's great uncle. As mentioned, at the death of Melanchthon's grandfather, Reuchlin took Melanchthon under his wing. He helped him learn Greek, which is why his name was changed from a German one to a Greek one. As mentioned, his initial name

[14] Horst F. Rupp, "Philipp Melanchthon: 1497–1560," *Profiles of Famous Educator* 26 (1996): 610-621.

[15] "Martin Luther and Philip Melanchthon," Insight of the King, https://www.insightoftheking.com/martin-luther-and-philip-melanchthon.html.

[16] B. T. Coolman, "Melanchthon, Philip," in *Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals*, Timothy Larsen, D. W. Bebbington, Mark A. Noll, and Steve Carter, eds. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 421.

was Schwarzerdt, which meant ‘black earth’ in German to Melanchthon because of his proficiency in Greek.[17]

Wittenberg

In 1518-1519, Melanchthon joined the faculty at the University of Wittenberg. He taught Greek. However, he wanted to teach Theology but could not because he was not qualified. During his time, he loved teaching the students how to learn Greek. He taught them Greek by “teaching them to read the Gospel of John.” He also accomplished mastery in Hebrew because of his studies with Martin Luther. Melanchthon still had the desire to teach Theology, but he did not have the qualification, so he completed a thesis that allowed him to receive his Theology degree and gave him the opportunity to teach both Greek and Theology. A significant part of his these was the term “imputation.” He used this term to “describe how the righteousness of Christ is imparted to those who put their faith and trust in Him.”[18]

Aristotle’s Influence on Melanchthon

Melanchthon’s evolving attitude to Aristotle in his earlier years and his eventual espousal of the Stagirite in forging a Lutheran brand of philosophy and humanist scholarship are a significant moment in Western intellectual history.[19] When he arrived at

[17] Scott Keith, “Meeting Melanchthon: The Early Years,” 1517 Christ for You, https://www.1517.org/articles/meeting-melanchthon-the-early-years.

[18] Scott Keith, “Meeting Melanchthon: The Early Years,” 1517 Christ for You, https://www.1517.org/articles/meeting-melanchthon-the-early-years.

[19] Sachiko Kusukawa, *The Transformation of Natural Philosophy: The Case of Philip Melanchthon* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 67.

the University of Wittenberg, he wanted to implement "the entire Aristotelian corpus."[20] Although Aristotle had a huge influence on Melanchthon, Luther was not too fond of it, and it gave Melanchthon hesitancy to fully accept Aristotle's philosophy. Ben-Tov says:

> In these early Sturm und Drang years of the Reformation, Melanchthon fully accepted Luther's rejection of most of Aristotelian philosophy. While Aristotle's rhetoric and poetics could still be taught, his metaphysics, physics, and ethics were at best useless sophisms, or worse yet the pretentious workings of corrupted human intelligence, heedless and blind to the light of divine wisdom. Paul's admonition to the Colossians (2:8): "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit," was often quoted by both Luther and Melanchthon. Though Aristotle was inextricably associated with scholasticism in the early sixteenth century, Luther and Melanchthon did not simply reject Aristotle's medieval "corruption;" rather, they rejected to a great extent the Stagirite himself.[21]

Melanchthon's Views on Education

Melanchthon had high views on education, which led to his significant contributions to it. His highest educational aims were "reverence" and a "cultured mind." Moral education was the center of his pedagogic concerns. His theory of teaching was based on the "idea that the understanding of subject matter implies certain values that will foster orientations in learning."[22] He suggested that the educator's job is to choose the

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[20] Karl Hartfelder, *Philipp Melanchthon als Praeceptor Germaniae* (Berlin, UK: Hofmann, 1889), 35–40.

[21] Asaph Ben-Tov, "Philipp Melanchthon's De Aristotele (1544): Biography as a Pedagogical Argument," in *Biography, Historiography, and Modes of Philosophizing* (New York City, NY: Brill, 2017), 251-266.

[22] Gunter Schmidt, "Foundations of Melanchthon's Views on Education," *Luther and Melanchthon in the Educational Thought in Central and Eastern Europe,* Reinhold Golz and Wolfgang Mayrhofer, eds., *Texte zur Theorie und Geschichte der Bildung* 10 (1998): 16-22.

next subject matter so that the value of learning for the student could be mentally and morally transformational.[23]

Melanchthon's Views on God

Based on *The Augsburg Confession*, Melanchthon believes that "there is one Divine Essence," and His name is God.[24] About God, he says that He is:

> …eternal, without body, without parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, the Maker and Preserver of all things, visible and invisible; and yet there are three Persons, of the same essence and power, who also are coeternal, the Father the Son, and the Holy Ghost. And the term "person" they use as the Fathers have used it, to signify, not a part or quality in another, but that which subsists of itself (Article 1).[25]

Melanchthon had strong views about God and who He is. He confessed to God in response to Emperor Charles V in Germany.

Melanchthon's Views on Christ

Based on *The Augsburg Confession,* His views of the Son of God are:

> the Son of God, did assume the human nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary, so that there are two natures, the divine and the human, inseparably enjoined in one Person, one Christ, true God and true man, who was born of the Virgin Mary, truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, that He might reconcile the Father unto us, and be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of men He also descended into hell, and truly rose again the third day; afterward He ascended into heaven that He might sit on the right hand of the Father, and forever reign and have dominion over all creatures, and sanctify

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[23] Gunter Schmidt, "Foundations of Melanchthon's Views on Education," *Luther and Melanchthon in the Educational Thought in Central and Eastern Europe,* Reinhold Golz and Wolfgang Mayrhofer, eds., *Texte zur Theorie und Geschichte der Bildung* 10 (1998): 16-22.

[24] Philip Melanchthon, "The Augsburg Confession," Lulu, https://bookofconcord.org/augsburg-confession/.

[25] Philip Melanchthon, "The Augsburg Confession," Lulu, https://bookofconcord.org/augsburg-confession/.

> them that believe in Him, by sending the Holy Ghost into their hearts, to rule, comfort, and quicken them, and to defend them against the devil and the power of sin. The same Christ shall openly come again to judge the quick and the dead, etc., according to the Apostles' Creed. (Article III)[26]

It is suggested that Melanchthon's Theology on Christ can be summarized in one sentence, which is, "To know Christ is to know his benefits."[27] He explains this in detail in his *Loci Communes* (Common Topics). He says:

> For through these topics Christ is properly known, if it is true that to know Christ is to know his benefits, and not, as they teach, to contemplate his natures and the modes of his incarnation. Unless you know why Christ took on flesh and was crucified, what is the profit of knowing historical facts about him? Or is it enough for a doctor to know the shapes, colours, and features of herbs, no matter that he does not know their inherent power? Just so, we must come to know Christ, who has been given to us as our remedy, and to use a scriptural word, our salvific remedy, in some way other than that which the Scholastics urge. This, finally is Christian knowledge – to know what the Law demands, where to find the power to fulfil the Law, where to claim grace for sins how to strengthen a wavering soul against the devil, the flesh, and the world, and how to console the afflicted conscience (pp. 24–25).[28]

Melanchthon's Views on Church Policy, Indifferent Matters, Bishops

Melanchthon's *Advice* was a document that talked about church policy and indifferent matters. In 1516, many churches had inherited practical matters from the Roman Church, and it caused chaos. Therefore, Melanchthon took the opportunity to create a document that prevented churches from handling matters and indifferent matters like the Romans. Advice also consisted of disputed points in church policy on human

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[26] Philip Melanchthon, "The Augsburg Confession," Lulu, https://bookofconcord.org/augsburg-confession/.

[27] Phillip Melanchthon, *Loci Communes*, vol. 4 (London, UK: Minerva Heritage Press, 2024).

[28] Melanchthon, *Loci Communes*.

traditions, justification, the Mass, celibacy of priests, confession[29] and invocation of saints.[30] Melanchthon also mentioned his view on the bishops of the church in the *Advice*. It says:

> Melanchthon regarded church government as a legal matter, and wrote that many bishops presided over churches in the same way that the Roman pontiff presided over his bishops. Melanchthon accepted the pope's canonical government on terms that it kept its boundaries; i.e., did not oppress true doctrine. Melanchthon stressed that it was necessary that the bishops, who had authority in the churches, should make sure to hand down healthy doctrine, since the church was entrusted to them; it was right to obey them. Furthermore, he wrote, since there was need to make judgments and to oversee the doctrine of priests, the bishops and the Roman pontiff should retain their proper authority. Melanchthon commended the monarchy of the Roman pontiff as a means to propagate right doctrine among many nations. He notes further that one might agree to papal supremacy in ecclesiastical policy if it could be established in the other articles as well. The kings could moderate the unjust and excessive power of the Roman pontiff. The pope's human authority excluded expounding new doctrine by the church's divine authority.[31]

Melanchthon's Views on Righteousness by Faith

The power of sin, the Law, and grace is considered the essence of Christian knowledge, according to Melanchthon. Sin, the law, and grace are three concepts of salvation that bring understanding to righteousness by faith.[32] Melanchthon emphasizes the nature of sin. He calls sin an "inner darkness of the mind," the "stubbornness of the heart," "doubts," "ignoring and despising" Jesus Christ, and "turning away" from the will

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[29] Melanchthon, *Loci Communes*.

[30] Charlotte Methuen, "Melanchthon's Opinion for de Langey [M. Gutachten an Ulrich Geiger für Guillaume de Bellay]," August 1, 1534, MBW R 2, MBW T 6, 1467, 134–143.

[31] Anja-Leena Laitakari-Pyykkö, "Philip Melanchthon's Influence on English Theological Thought During the Early English Reformation," PhD diss., University of Helsinki, 2013.

[32] Adrian Petre, "The Role of the Heart and Will in Philip Melanchthon's Theology of Righteousness by Faith," *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary* 17, no. 2 (2014): 145-166.

of God.[33] Against these, the Holy Spirit brings conviction. When a person becomes convicted of their sin is when they recognize that the only way to be saved is to trust "in the grace of Christ"[34] so that he can be justified by faith.

Melanchthon's Work

In 1514, Melanchthon taught rhetoric and dialectic while giving thought to Theology. Influenced by his uncle, Reuchlin and Erasmus, he was convinced that Christianity differed from Scholastic Theology. His conviction is what led him to be a reformer. In 1518, at the age of twenty-one, he became a Greek professor at the University of Wittenberg.[35] Melanchthon made significant contributions to the Protestant Reformation. He convinced the church and academy that research should be done from primary sources by reading the biblical text in its original language. He transformed theological education in Europe. He was also responsible for grounding the central idea of educated faith as the new approach to the Christian faith. Melanchthon implemented that prayers and praying should be implemented in the academy of the universities. Because of this, he was also called "the teacher of basic education and the teacher of theology and faith practice."[36]

In 1519, Melanchthon was spectating in 1519 at a disputation in Leipzig. He had an encounter with Johann Eck, and in response to their conversation, he wrote a booklet

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[33] Melanchthon*, Loci Communes*, 47.

[34] Adrian Petre, "The Role of the Heart and Will in Philip Melanchthon's Theology of Righteousness by Faith," *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary* 17, no. 2 (2014): 145-166.

[35] Michael Alderson, "Melanchthon's Authorizing of Luther: An Examination of the Narrative Origins of Sixteenth-Century Historical Life-Writing," PhD diss., Durham University, 2014.

[36] M. Jung, "Philipp Melanchthon – Gebildeter Glaube," *Luther* 82, no. 3 (2011): 150–162.

called *Defensio contra Johannem Eckium* (Defense against Johann Eck). This was his first publication as a Reformer. In this booklet, he insisted that every student needs a mentor. He reformed traditional disputations.[37] Despite his speech impediment, he introduced training in public speech. The universities of Tubingen, Heidelberg, Leipzig, and Frankfurt experienced transformation because of his work and influence.[38]

In 1519, Melanchthon partnered with Martin Luther and served under his tutelage. Melanchthon received his theological degree under Luther. He taught Art and Theology. He had a unique blend of humanism and theology. Humanism gave him a method of interpreting texts.[39]

In 1521, Melanchthon published a work called *Loci communes rerum theologicarum seu hypotyposes theologicase* (Common Topics of Theology or Theological Outline). In this work, he gave "organization and precision to Luther's fundamental ideas."[40] Another publication that made a significant contribution to Systematic Theology was *Loci Communes* (Common Topics). The *Loci Communes* was a theological handbook that served as an exegetical companion to the Bible or as a devotional. This work aimed to transform the students' minds so they could be ready and prepared to read the scriptures. This work stemmed from his lectures on the book of Romans (sin, law, and grace). This work also offers an alternative to Peter Lombard's

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[37] Van Wyk and W. C. Ignatius, "Philipp Melanchthon: A Short Introduction," *HTS Theological Studies* 73, no. 1 (2017): 1-8, https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i1.4672.

[38] H. Scheible, "Melanchthon, Philipp," *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* 4, no. 5 (2002): 1002–1011.

[39] Timothy J. Wengert, "Melanchthon, Philip (1497–1560)," in *The Dictionary of Historical Theology* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 2000), 363.

[40] Coolman, "Melanchthon, Philip," 421.

philosophical interpretation of the Christian faith. His deep study of Romans heavily influenced this work.[41]

Melanchthon, during the Reformation, argued that theology was not philosophy. He used Paul's Epistles to help develop and defend his argument. He summarizes what the Gospel is in this way, "The gospel is not philosophy neither law, but forgiveness of sins and proclamation of the reconciliation and eternal life for the sake of Christ. About these things, the human reason has no idea" (p. 690).[42] Melanchthon emphasized that philosophical approaches were insufficient to interpret theological truths. He suggested that one must study the Bible in-depth, especially the Pauline Epistles, to understand the Christian faith and the Gospel.

In 1523, he published the *Praise of Eloquence*. Between 1527-29, he went on a church and school visitation where the Anabaptist practices were discovered. There was a disputation on the distinction between Law and Gospel.[43] Melanchthon, who was also known as a Lutheran Theologian, believed that the law is not the Gospel and the Gospel is not the law. Melanchthon says (about the law): "The law is teaching given by God, which directs what we are to be like, what we are to do, what we must omit." He says that the law requires perfect obedience but the Gospel becomes vital since humans are sinners.[44] He says:

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[41] Van Wyk and W. C. Ignatius, "Philipp Melanchthon: A Short Introduction," *HTS Theological Studies* 73, no. 1 (2017): 1-8, https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i1.4672.

[42] Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther and Herbert JA Bouman, *Law and Gospel* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1981).

[43] John R. Schneider, *Philip Melanchthon's Rhetorical Construal of Biblical Authority* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990).

[44] Van Wyk and W. C. Ignatius, "Philipp Melanchthon: A Short Introduction," *HTS Theological Studies* 73, no. 1 (2017): 1-8, https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i1.4672.

> Just as the Law is that by which correct living is commanded and sin is revealed, so the Gospel is the promise of God's grace or mercy, that is, the forgiveness of sin and the testimony of God's kindness toward us. By this testimony, our souls are assured of God's kindness. By it, we believe that all our guilt has been pardoned, we are strengthened to love and praise God, to be happy and to rejoice in him …[45]

Melanchthon puts a strong distinction between law and the Gospel so the Christians will not fall into legalism.

Melanchthon also had two different kinds of righteousness. Wengert says:

> When some radical reformers in Wittenberg, such as Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, insisted on the use of Mosaic Law in civil affairs and denigrated the role of the humanities for Christians, both Luther and Melanchthon developed in 1521–22 a distinction between two kinds of righteousness. Civil righteousness had its place within this world and human relations and was based upon principles of (natural) law embodied in the Ten Commandments—what Melanchthon later called the first use of the Law. Evangelical, or divine, righteousness came from God's word of forgiveness (the 'second use' of the Law and the gospel). This distinction allowed Melanchthon to teach in both the arts faculty (where he lectured on Aristotle, Cicero, history and Greek and Latin literature and language) and the theology faculty (where he produced important commentaries on Romans, Colossians and Proverbs as well as the *Loci communes*). Against certain antinomian challenges by Johannes Agricola and others, Melanchthon insisted that the Law also functioned in Christian lives, and in 1534 he defined a third use of the Law as a guide for the Christian life.[46]

Melanchthon's Style of Writing

Melanchthon's orations followed the style of demonstrative speeches, which is known as the fourth genre of speech.[47] Demonstrative speeches were designed to be deliberate, and they gave a sense of urgency to the listener to decide about a future action.

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[45] P. Melanchthon, *Loci Communes. Lateinisch – Deutsch* (Gütersloh, GER: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1521, 1997).

[46] Wengert, "Melanchthon, Philip (1497–1560)," 364.

[47] Wengert, "Melanchthon, Philip (1497–1560)," 363.

Melanchthon made this style of writing a central format of his teaching.[48] He drafted a book called *Three Books on Rhetoric* (1519), where he suggested that "demonstrative speech was the fundamental type of speech." He further suggested that this type of speech gave rise to other styles of speech. He stated that, "…many rhetoricians had dealt with amply the second function (praise or blame), but hardly with the first (teaching); the first function of teaching by demonstrative speech was explained properly in his dialectics."[49] Schneider suggested that the demonstrative genre united Melanchthon's rhetoric and dialectics.[50] Melanchthon's contribution of a new rhetorical genre to the classical genres was a vital instrument for the reformation of traditions and institutions. His speaking and writing genre was key for survival in the face of theological and political chaos during the Reformation.[51]

Melanchthon's Oratorical Skills

Melanchthon did his first speech at Wittenberg in 1518. He was twenty-one years old. Based on his appearance, the audience he spoke to did not believe he had oratorical skills. He was "small and gawky stature, with a face like a boy."[52] It was also suggested

[48] Philipp Melanchthon, *Melanchthon: Orations on Philosophy and Education* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 89.

[49] Melanchthon, *Melanchthon*, 110.

[50] Schneider, *Philip Melanchthon's Rhetorical Construal of Biblical Authority*, 37.

[51] Michael R. Kearney, "Melanchthon's Didactic Genre and the Rhetoric of Reformation," *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 40, no. 1 (2022): 23-42.

[52] Isabella Walser-Bürgler, "A Question of Genre: Philip Melanchthon's Oratorical Debut at Wittenberg University," *Renaissance Studies* (2023).

that he had a thin voice and a speech impediment.[53] However, despite his appearance and his speech impediment, he says:

> The audience is difficult to pinpoint exactly, but from the groups addressed by Melanchthon throughout his speech, it is safe to say that students, professors and other representatives of Wittenberg University, as well as local dignitaries, were present to gain a first impression of the new professor and hear him speak. Judging from the ensuing textual evidence, Melanchthon must not have disappointed; in fact, he must even have surprised. His rhetorical skills, his piercing arguments and the substance of his words earned him an immediate reputation as a learned man worthy of his office, despite the fact that his appearance initially led people to doubt that the 21-year-old was the right man for the job.[54]

Martin Luther, who was also in attendance for Melanchthon's speech, was surprised by his oratorical skills. Luther wrote in a letter to Georg Spalatian, a couple of days after his speech, that states:

> He [Melanchthon] gave his inaugural oration on the fourth day upon his arrival, which was clearly most sophisticated and refined. It secured him the greatest favour and admiration from all people present, so that you no longer have to consider how to recommend him to us. We quickly laid aside our opinion and view of his stature and character and congratulate ourselves on such a professor.[55]

Melanchthon's Theology of Preaching: Apology of the Augsburg Confession

Melanchthon took preaching God's Word seriously. Simut states,

> Preaching the Word of God is a vital theme for Melanchthon's theology not only because he was a member of the reformist party— later known as Protestant—and preaching God's Word is essential to what is now called Protestant thought, but also because, as a reformer, he wanted to delineate his dogmatic system from the tradition of the ecclesiastical party dominated by the papal institution, nowadays identified as the Roman Catholic church; in this paper therefore, classical terms

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[53] Frank Günter, ed., *Philipp Melanchthon: Der Reformator zwischen Glauben und Wissen* (Berlin, GER: de Gruyter, 2017), 25–42.

[54] Isabella Walser-Bürgler, "A Question of Genre: Philip Melanchthon's Oratorical Debut at Wittenberg University," *Renaissance Studies* (2023).

[55] Martin Luther, *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, Briefwechsel, 1, Band, Briefe 1501–1520, Gustav Bebermeyer, ed. (Weimar, UK: Böhlau, 1930), 192 (no. 88).

> like ‘protestants’ and ‘Catholics’ will be replaced by ‘reformists’ and ‘romanists’ because in the early sixteenth century both parties considered themselves part of the Catholic church.[56]

Therefore, he created the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* to respond to the *Pontifical Confutation of the Augsburg Confession* that was authored by Johann Eck. Melanchthon’s work was to describe that theological preaching is proclaiming Christ, the Gospel, and repentance.[57]

Melanchthon and Luther

Melanchthon and Luther had a great relationship with one another. Melanchthon’s speech at Wittenberg moved Luther. Luther was the reason Melanchthon was hired at the University of Wittenberg.[58] A couple of months after Melanchthon’s arrival, he wrote this poem to Luther:

> Oh, sacred priest of Israel! You who are holier than peace-offerings,
> Chosen servant of imperishable truth,
> Oh, immaculate commander of pious souls,
> Oh, man of devotion, oh God-breathed angel of wisdom,
> Of eternal justice and of the divine Word;
> Blessed initiate of that life-giving spirit,
> You who spread the sweet balsamic fragrance of the true Christian Church and the temple of the all-merciful God
> By the preaching of grace;
> You faithful and sleepless shepherd who
> Thrust out the thievish wolf—drive out the sophist Belial! Oh patron of truth, finally dispel with the wonder-working
> Staff of Moses the idiotic minds of those who do battle in long-winded

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[56] Corneliu C. Simuț, “Philip Melanchthon’s Early Theology of Preaching: Theologizing the Word of God in His Apology of the Augsburg Confession (1531),” *The Expository Times* 129, no. 1 (2017): 14-31.

[57] Corneliu C. Simuț, “Philip Melanchthon’s Early Theology of Preaching: Theologizing the Word of God in His Apology of the Augsburg Confession (1531),” *The Expository Times* 129, no. 1 (2017): 14-31.

[58] Gottlieb Christiaan Bester, “The Spirituality of Martin Luther as Exemplified in his Letters to Philip Melanchthon,” PhD diss., Stellenbosch University, 2011.

> Disputations—those ghostly conjurers! Set fire to their unending banter
> With the burning juniper coals of the Word!
> Fight the uphill battle, and follow ceaselessly the burning
> Standard of Jesus! Protect with your shield the blessed lot of the faithful![59]

They helped one another with their education. Bester states, "Melanchthon helped Luther with his Greek, history and the systemization of his thoughts, while Luther assisted Melanchthon with his theology."[60] Although they had a close relationship and held each other in high regard, they also had differences. Bester says:

> Melanchthon was often pained by Luther's harsh rhetoric and verbal combativeness while Luther was troubled with Melanchthon's willingness to compromise (Zophy, 1998, p. 437). These opinions and others where expressed openly. For example, from Wartburg Luther wrote to Melanchthon: "Your high opinion of me shames and tortures me..." (Luther, Luther's Works: Letters I, 1963, p. 257). Nevertheless, Melanchthon could be equally harsh towards Luther. In 1525, years after the letters were written, he disagreed with Luther's decision to get married to such an extent that he eventually refused to attend the ceremony. Such brutal honesty can only be shared between true friends.[61]

Although both Melanchthon and Luther had their differences, both depended on one another.

Melanchthon's Influence on Wittenberg

Melanchthon was known as the "soul of the University of Wittenberg" because of his influence on their education. He believed that studying languages was not enough to be a good preacher/teacher. Therefore, he devised ways to train ministers so they could be equipped. Friedrich stated:

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[59] P. Melanchthon, E. H. Herrmann, and J. B. Prothro, "Philip Melanchthon's Poem to Martin Luther," *Concordia Journal* 36, no. 2 (2010): 97-101.

[60] Gottlieb Christiaan Bester, "The Spirituality of Martin Luther as Exemplified in his Letters to Philip Melanchthon," PhD diss., Stellenbosch University, 2011.

[61] Gottlieb Christiaan Bester, "The Spirituality of Martin Luther as Exemplified in his Letters to Philip Melanchthon," PhD diss., Stellenbosch University, 2011.

> He produced superior texts in Greek grammar and syntax, Latin gram- mar, rhetoric, psychology, physics, and mathematics. He prepared new translations, based on more authentic texts, of Cicero, Tacitus, Sallust, Quintilian, Virgil, Ovid, Demosthenes, and Pindar. He also translated selected portions of Thucydides, Xenophon, Plutarch, Homer, Hesiod, and Ptolemy, and provided translations of eight- cen dramas of Euripides. His wide range of interests included astronomy, geography, history, and natural science; but in all of these pursuits he was the Christian scholar trying to prepare the well- rounded student.[62]

From 1519 to 1520, the University of Wittenberg flourished under the leadership of Melanchthon and Luther. It was because of their influence that resulted in students traveling from all over Europe to study with them.

Melanchthon's Impact on the Future

Melanchthon died in 1560, but his work still lives on. Although Luther was the head of the Protestant Reformation, Melanchthon was not too far because of how much work he contributed, such as *Loci Communes.* He was an advocate for education and made sure that the students that he was teaching were getting the best theological training so that they could be effective communicators of God's truth. Melanchthon was enthusiastic, making sure that ministers were trained and equipped as well. Androne states:

> Melanchthon constantly promotes the idea that the Church itself needs well educated ministers in order to face any dispute they may get involved in: "It is a great mistake to imagine that ministers can be carved from any wood, and that the teaching of religion can be grasped without erudition and without long training. […] Therefore in all ages there have been the most violent disputes in the Church. However, for the explanation of the major controversies one needs not only a ready mind and a certain knowledge of the sacred books, but also the art of disputation, fluent speech and a knowledge of history, antiquity and judgments of the past."[63]

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[62] Ferdinand Cohrs, "Philipp Melanchthon," *Deutschlands Lehrer* (Halle, 1897): 3147.

[63] Mihai Androne, "The Influence of the Protestant Reformation on Education," *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 137 (2014): 80-87.

His work is still being used by Lutheran Universities and Lutheran schools. Ashmon states, “The Reformation’s impact on education was profound … Luther was a theological reformer. At the same time, he was an educational reformer. His compatriot, Philip Melanchthon, was the key curricular architect.”[64]

Conclusion

Although Philip Melanchthon was the second man to Martin Luther, his work had a first-class impact. Melanchthon’s early childhood education prepared him for the Protestant Reformation and other reformations he helped with at different universities in Egypt and across Europe. From his early influences and his mastery of Greek, Hebrew, and Latin is what gave him a spotlight from men like Martin Luther. Luther relied heavily on Melanchthon, and without Melanchthon, there would be no *Loci Communes* or *95 Theses*. His contribution to the Protestant Reformation is unmatched.

The life, work, and ministry of Philip Melanchthon are foundational to my project for several reasons. The fact that he had a speech impediment caught my eye. But what persuaded me to study him was the body of work he did despite his speech impediment. Despite his speech impediment, he gave a speech at the University of Wittenberg that brought reformation to the university. His speech which promoted rhetoric, academic discipline, and education, influenced the eloquence of the sixteenth century.[65]

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[64] Concordia University Irvine, “The Reformation: Still Shaping Future,” CUI, https://www.cui.edu/aboutcui/reformation500/articles/post/the-reformation-still-shaping-futures.

[65] Isabella Walser-Bürgler, “A Question of Genre: Philip Melanchthon's Oratorical Debut at Wittenberg University,” *Renaissance Studies* (2023).

Melanchthon was more than an eloquent speaker. He was also an exceptional writer. His writing helped him become the speaker he was during the Protestant Reformation era. He wrote speeches for himself and others, including speeches for scholars like Georg Major, Georg Sabinus, and David Chytraeus.[66] Before he started speaking, he was first writing. When it was time for him to give his first speech, he was ready and persuasive in what he communicated at the University of Wittenberg.

I want to implement his approach to becoming confident in speaking so that my target audience can become confident in their speaking ability. I believe that if you are not confident in your ability to write, then you will not be confident in your ability to communicate effectively. One of the changes he brought to the University of Wittenberg was learning of the classical texts' different types of speech genres, such as demonstrative speech, to help train ministers to become eloquent. This is the approach I want to take when I start my six-week course on speaking and writing well. I want to expose my audience to different types of classical texts, speakers, and styles of speaking so that they can have a historical understanding of what speech is. I also want to do the same thing for writing. One of the objectives is to expose them to different types of speakers and writings. Another objective is to do what Melanchthon did for his students, which is teaching them the basic mechanics of rhetoric and dialectic so that they can learn how to write and speak effectively.

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[66] Horst Koehn, *Philipp Melanchthons Reden: Verzeichnis der im 16 Jahrhundert erschienenen Drucke* (Frankfurt, GER: Buchhändler-Vereinigung, 1985).

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

Anthropology is the study of humankind. Anthropology is composed of four specialized fields: cultural anthropology, linguistics, archaeology, and physical anthropology. There are two different approaches to anthropology. There is a secular approach that studies and observes man's demographic origin, natural history, and social development. The second approach is the theological approach. This is also known as Biblical Anthropology. Biblical Anthropology is the biblical study of man. Biblical Anthropology uses the Bible as a source to study and observe the origin of man, the nature of humankind, and its condition. It focuses on humanity's relationship with God and how that relationship affected the world. It also focuses on the philosophy or psychology of self. Understanding humanity from a biblical perspective will inform the purpose and scope of this chapter. The origin of man finds its creation from and through God.

The purpose and scope of this chapter are to explore the creation of humanity, the fall and its consequences, redemption and restoration in Christ, views concerning man's origin, and other topics that will shed light on the creation of man from a biblical perspective. I will be exploring the creative intent of God as it relates to Moses' speech impediment in Exodus 4:10-17. This chapter will explore the effect of the fall and its

possible consequences on humankind regarding Moses's speech impediment. The essence of this project is to focus on helping Black males, eighteen to twenty-four, become more confident and comfortable engaging in public speaking. Therefore, I will use Biblical Anthropology to explore that Moses' speech impediment was not a mistake in God's creative design. Rather, it was a creative aspect that God gave Moses to become more confident in God and comfortable in relying on Him to speak on behalf of the nation of Israel and to be their liberator from Egyptian bondage.

Creation of Humanity

Genesis 1:26-27 says, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness' … So, God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." In this passage, we see that the creation of humanity was created and influenced by the Trinity, which consists of God, the Father, Jesus Christ, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. There are several views regarding the plural pronouns in this passage. Among commentators and scholars, the plural reference is understood as (1) a remnant of polytheistic myth, (2) God's address to creation, (3) a plural indicating divine honor and majesty, (4) self-deliberation, (5) divine address to a heavenly court of angels, and (6) divine dialogue within the Trinity.[1] However, I do not agree with the first five positions. I agree with the last position and interpretation that was proposed by the early Church Fathers and perpetuated by the Reformers. They believed the plural reference was a Trinitarian and intra-Trinity dialogue. The Trinity or Trinitarian argument was expanded and confirmed through the writings of the New

[1] D. J. A. Clines, "The Image of God in Man," *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968): 53-103.

Testament.[2] This passage also states that God made man in His image. The Hebrew word for image means likeness or representation.[3]

Different views have been held about what it means to be made in God's image. Some believe it is mind and body, while others believe it is mind, body, and soul. Historically, theologians have viewed the image of God in terms of our minds and bodies. For example, Athanasius focused on our rationality since Jesus was the Word, and he revealed God to humanity.

On the other hand, Augustine, with the Trinity in mind, focused on the three faculties of the soul, memoria, intellectus, and amor (memory, intellect, love). The Reformers believed that the image of God was seen in humanity's original righteousness pre-fall. However, they also argued that the image of God was broken in us by the fall.[4]

However, over the last half-century, theologians have moved from a mind and body view of the image of God to a more unified, metaphysical approach.[5] Gerhard von Rad states, "One does well to separate as little as possible the bodily and spiritual; the whole man is created in the image of God."[6] Considering the image of God, humanity was created as both physical and spiritual beings. Although there are different views, you cannot separate the mind and body or the mind, body, and soul. God created humans to

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[2] J. Pelikan and D. Poellot, *Luther's Works: Lectures on Genesis*, G. Schick and K. A. Mathews, trans. (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1996), 24.

[3] Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, M. E. J. Richardson, and Johann Jakob Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, UK: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 1028.

[4] Paula Gooder, *Searching for Meaning: An Introduction to Interpreting the New Testament* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 185.

[5] Walter Brueggemann, "Preaching as Reimagination," *Theology Today* 52, no. 3 (1995): 313-329.

[6] Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis* (Nashville, TN: Westminster John Knox Press, 1973), 56.

reveal and reflect Him in the world. The image of God was an unknown concept in the ancient Near East. In the ANE, it was a custom for a king to erect his statue to show his presence and authority. However, by God creating humanity in His image, He marks us as His creation. He shows the world that humans are under his authority and care.[7]

Three views about the creation of humanity disagree with God's involvement in it. Those views are evolution, theistic evolution, and creationism. Evolution Theory is based on naturalism and suggests that creation does not involve any divine involvement. Evolution Theory was proposed by Charles Darwin in 1859 in his book, "On the Origin of Species." Darwin believed that humans on Earth developed over a million years from a few common ancestors. His theory holds that variation within species occurs randomly (known as natural selection) and that each created being is determined by that organism's ability to adapt to its environment.[8] His work on evolution brought clarity to the confused evolutionary field. It brought two insights. First, the understanding that the variation among individuals within species was not an imperfection that could be ignored but that it represented the reality in the organic world. The second one was that a mechanism could transform variation within groups into variation between them that would explain the origin of species.[9]

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[7] D. J. A. Clines, "A Biblical Doctrine of Man," *CBRF Journal* 28 (1976): 9–38.

[8] Juli Peretó, Jeffrey L. Bada, and Antonio Lazcano, "Charles Darwin and the Origin of Life," *Origins of Life and Evolution of Biospheres* 39 (2009): 395-406.

[9] Richard C. Lewontin, *The Genetic Basis of Evolutionary Change* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1974), 167.

I do not agree with the Evolution Theory because for it to work, three major components must exist: spontaneous generation, natural selection, and time.[10] Spontaneous generation is the idea that living organisms could emerge from non-living materials.[11] I disagree with this stance. All things, including humans, originated from a divine God who is a living being and spirit (Jn. 4:24). Nothing that lives originates from anyone or anything that is non-living. Spontaneous generation also suggests that for anything to appear, there must be the right chemical reaction. However, Louis Pasteur's experiments on germs and bacteria in 1861 proved that life can only come from life.[12] There was an experiment done in 1953 by Stanley Miller known as the Miller-Urey experiment. This experiment supposedly simulated the primordial conditions of the Earth and demonstrated spontaneous generation. The experiment included certain gases that were charged by electricity. However, this collaboration emitted amino acids. Amino acids are a far cry from life. The experiment also exposed that when the amino acids were exposed to an electrical charge, they disintegrated.[13] Furthermore, the law of thermodynamics suggests that energy can neither be created nor destroyed.[14]

God is the only One who can generate any living thing. God is the only one who can create something out of nothing. The term is called creation ex nihilo, "from

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[10] Ralph Linton, *The Study of Man: An Introduction* (New York, NY: Appleton Century Crofts, Inc., 1936).

[11] Henry Morris, *The Biblical Basis for Modern Science* (Philadelphia, PA: Master Books, 2008), 231.

[12] Louis Pasteur, "On the Germ Theory," *Science* 62 (1881): 420-422.

[13] Eric T. Parker, et al., "Conducting Miller-Urey Experiments," *JoVE (Journal of Visualized Experiments)* 83 (2014): e51039.

[14] Rong-Gen Cai and Sang Pyo Kim, "First Law of Thermodynamics," Science Direct, https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/chemistry/first-law-of-thermodynamics.

nothing," which is the unique act by which God founded all creaturely reality. This was an act undertaken without any external aid or non-divine condition, including preexisting matter.[15] Creation ex nihilo creates a distinction between created things that depends its existence on God. Fergusson says that creatio ex nihilo's clear distinction in the status of created things from the uncreated brings with it the implication that "it belongs not to theology but to natural science to discover how the world works."[16]

Natural selection is defined as the evolution of living organisms through adaptations and mutations.[17] Two types of adaptations undergird natural selection. They are horizontal adaptation and vertical adaptation. Horizontal adaptation due to elements and conditions occurs within a species, such as dogs, cats, predators, etc. However, vertical adaptations speak to the changing of a species. For example, there are horses and dogs, but there will never be a horse-dog.[18] I do not agree with vertical adaptation because it was never a part of God's original sign for creation. The Second Law of Thermodynamics contradicts natural selection. The Second Law of Thermodynamics says that every system, left to its own devices, tends to move from order to disorder.[19] Therefore, this claim makes natural selection impossible.

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[15] Mark Ward, et al., eds. *Lexham Survey of Theology* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 69.

[16] Jonathan R. Wilson, "Creation [Guides to Theology], Written by David Fergusson," *Journal of Reformed Theology* 10, no. 3 (2016): 270-271.

[17] Michael J. Wade and Susan Kalisz, "The Causes of Natural Selection," *Evolution* 44, no. 8 (1990): 1947-1955.

[18] Ralph Linton, *The Study of Man.*

[19] Scott M. Huse, *The Collapse of Evolution* (Los Angeles, CA: Baker Books, 1997), 303-358.

Time is vital for an evolutionist. However, there is not enough time to support that evolution is valid. Sir Francis Hoyle, who is an astrophysicist, says that there is a low probability of anyone or anything forming by chance. He says the fraction is so small that the probability is zero.[20] In the Collapse of Evolution, Scott Huse states, "The probability of life arising in [a purely accidental and aimless natural process] is comparable to the probability of a monkey typing a perfect unabridged dictionary."[21] Evolutionists do not have enough reliable evidence to prove that the creation of the world and humanity happened by chance or coincidence.

Theistic Evolution, also known as "evolutionary creationism," suggests that God created everything through a natural process. Francisco Ayala, who is a theistic evolutionist, states, "Living beings can be explained as the result of a natural process (natural selection) without any need to resort to a Creator or another external agent."[22] Francis Collins states, "Once evolution got under way, no special supernatural intervention was required."[23] Theistic Evolution believes that God created the creation of humanity and species. However, the tension with this view is that it believes that God has limited supernatural intervention and involvement. It is suggested that people who subscribe to theistic evolution claim to know that God never intervened with any

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[20] Simon Mitton, *Fred Hoyle: A Life in Science* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 202.

[21] Huse, *The Collapse of Evolution*, 130.

[22] Francisco Ayala, "Darwin's Greatest Discovery: Design without Designer," *PNAS* 104 (2007): 8573.

[23] Francis Collins, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2006), 200.

creation. Others believe that God created humanity as a natural process, not a supernatural one.[24]

I disagree with this view because God is not a natural God. He is a supernatural one. Everything that was created by Him is divine. Theistic evolution tries to use the natural to understand the supernatural. However, this is impossible to do. God is a mystery. Isaiah 40:28 says, "Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth." God is not a local divine being. His creative power extends to the limits of civilization and the limitless expanse of the heavens. God's wisdom is unlimited and beyond human comprehension.[25] No one or nothing can fully understand God.

Theistic evolution does not have an adequate interpretation of Genesis 1-2. Some theistic evolutionists deny the historicity of Adam and Eve. Denis Lamoureux states, "Did the apostle Paul believe that Adam was a real person? Yes, well of course he did. Paul was a first-century Jew, and like every Jew around him, he accepted the historicity of Adam … It is understandable why most Christians believe that Adam was a real historical person. This is exactly what Scripture states in both the Old and New Testament."[26] However, in the same breath, he believes that this statement is not true

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[24] Evidence Unseen, "Theistic Evolution: A Critical Evaluation," Evidence Unseen, https://www.evidenceunseen.com/articles/science-and-scripture/theistic-evolution-a-critical-evaluation/.

[25] Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 40-66: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, vol. 15 (Austin, TX: B and H Publishing Group, 2009), 208.

[26] Denis Lamoureux, "Was Adam a Real Person? Part 3," *BioLogos,* http://biologos.org/blogs/archive/was-adam-a-real-person-part-3.

because he also believes that the Bible makes statements about how God's creation never happened and that Adam never existed.[27]

Theistic evolution diminishes the New Testament understanding of the historicity of Adam and Eve. Both the Gospel writers and Paul affirm the historicity of Adam and Eve. Luke 3:38 says, "The son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God." In this passage, Luke is tracing Jesus back to Adam. Romans 5:12-15 says, "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men a because all sinned—for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come." Some theistic evolutionists believe that Paul was not referring to a literal Adam, but a literary one. Dennis Venema and Scot McKnight believe that "the Adam and Eve of the Bible are a literary Adam and Eve."[28] However, that is not what Paul is saying. He is saying that Adam and Eve are the paradigm of the human condition, which is humanity chooses to sin and disobey God.[29] So, their claim does not fit this passage.

Theistic Evolution can be a dangerous theory to subscribe to because it does not fully give God credit for making humans. At its core, it is a "naturalistic scientism which makes it a failed project."[30] God was fully involved in the creation of humanity. There

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[27] Denis Lamoureux, "No Historical Adam: Evolutionary Creation View," in *Four Views on the Historical Adam* (Nashville, TN: Barrett and Caneday, 2002), 56 and 58.

[28] Dennis R. Venema and Scot McKnight, *Adam and the Genome: Reading Scripture after Genetic Science* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2017), 118.

[29] Venema and McKnight, *Adam and the Genome*, 189.

was nothing natural about His creative work. In Genesis 1:27, the word create describes the origin of the first humans. God is the subject of creation, and he is the only one who can create. The use of the word create is "appropriate to the concept of creation by divine fiat."[31] The word formed in Genesis 2:7 "emphasizes the shaping of an object," and the word create speaks to the "initiation of the object."[32] God's creation is always supernatural. Therefore, there is nothing natural, nor is there any natural process about God's creation of humanity.

Creationism is a theory that believes that God created all things, and it recognizes that science supports and validates the Bible. I agree with this theory because it uses both the Bible and science to confirm that God created everything. Creationism believes that the Genesis account of chapters one and two provides an accurate and literal depiction of the world's origin.[33] There are two arguments for Creationism: intelligent design and young earth. Intelligent Design believes that the earth was designed by an intelligent higher power, rather than the result of natural causes.[34] Young Earth claims that the Earth

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[30] Evidence Unseen, "Theistic Evolution: A Critical Evaluation," Evidence Unseen, https://www.evidenceunseen.com/articles/science-and-scripture/theistic-evolution-a-critical-evaluation/.

[31] R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, Jr., and B. K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1978), 127.

[32] Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testamen*t, 127.

[33] Ralph M. Barnes, Rebecca A. Church, and Samuel Draznin-Nagy, "An Argument for Creationism Exploring the Case for Intelligent Design," The Revelation, https://www.therebelution.com/blog/2024/04/an-argument-for-creationism-exploring-the-case-for-intelligent-design/.

[34] Michael Ruse, "Dossier Évolution et Créationnisme: Intelligent Design Theory," *Natures Sciences Sociétés* 15, no. 3 (2007): 285-286.

and all of life were created by God in a short period. Although there are arguments on how long, the basis of Young Earth is that God is the Creator of the Earth and all life.[35]

Intelligent Design is a theory that was created to combat the views of Charles Darwin's mechanism of natural selection. Larson states:

> Intelligent Design Theory is only the latest salvo in the ongoing fight between American biblical literalists and students of the life sciences, a fight that has been going on at least since the publication of Charles Darwin's on the Origin of Species in 1859 and that has been marked by such events as the Scopes trial in 1925, when a young school teacher in Tennessee was prosecuted for (and found guilty of) teaching that humans are descended from monkeys.[36]

Intelligent Design Theory is a theory I agree with because it believes in the existence of God and it believes that everything that was created was done intentionally, not through a natural process. Young Earth believes and claims that the creation days of Genesis Chapter One were six literal days that occurred more than 12,000 years ago.[37] They support this view because they believe that Genesis is history**,** not mythology. They believe that Genesis Chapters One through Eleven show characteristics of historical narratives.[38]

Although there was no human present when God created Earth and all life that dwells in it, I side with Creationism because its belief is solely based on the supernatural work of God. They believe that someone more powerful and superior is the reason for

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[35] Steven Ball, "A Christian Physicist Examines the Age of the Earth," Courtesy of NASA, Nasa.org.

[36] E. J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate Over Science and Religion* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1997), 85.

[37] David G. Bromley, Merin Duke, and Simren Bhatt, "Young Earth Creationist View Summarized and Defended," Answering Genesis, https://answersingenesis.org/creationism/young-earth/young-earth-creationist-view-summarized-and-defended/.

[38] Walter Kaiser, *The Old Testament Documents: Are They Reliable and Relevant?* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001), 53–83.

human existence. I agree with what Roger Patterson says in his book *Evolution Exposed*. He states:

> Just as evolutionists weren't there to see evolution happen over several billion years, neither were creationists there to see the events of the six days of creation. The difference is that creationists have the Creator's eyewitness account of the events of creation, while evolutionists must create a story to explain origins without the supernatural.[39]

Formation of Man and Woman

In Genesis Chapter Two, we see the formation of man and woman. Genesis 2:7 says, "then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature." This is the formation of Adam. The latter verses show that aloneness with God is not good. Therefore, He declares that He will make a helper that will complement Adam. Genesis 2:22 says, "And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man." This is the formation of Eve. The significance of gender and human relationships is to ensure that humanity fulfills what it was created to do. Man and woman were designed to complement one another to be fruitful. As it relates to the formation of man and woman in Genesis Chapter Two, God created two complementary sexes who were designed to become one in marriage and procreate.[40]

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[39] Roger Todd Patterson, "Evolution Exposed: Your Evolution Answer Book for the Classroom," Answers in Genesis, https://answersingenesis.org/answers/books/evolution-exposed-earth-science/.

[40] Andrew E. Steinmann, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* (Nashville, TN: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 174.

Purpose of Humanity

God created humans to be representatives of Him, to have dominion over all creation, and to be good stewards by being fruitful and multiplying and filling the earth. Genesis 1:26 says, “Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’” So, one of the purposes of humanity is to exercise freedom with authority over all the other creatures entrusted to its care.[41] God created humanity to represent Him well through using divine wisdom to exercise dominion over what He created.

Humanity was created to be relational with God and with each other. God created humanity to commune with them. In Genesis chapters one and two, God speaks to humanity, provides guidance, equips, commissions, and blesses. McKeown states, “…to a superior and responsible relationship with God. God has a unique relationship with the creatures made in his image, and this is the ideal context for blessing.”[42] When God created humanity, He desired to be in a relationship with them. We see that in the rest of the narrative in Genesis and throughout the Bible. Humanity’s chief aim is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.[43]

Another purpose of humanity is also to be in a relationship with one another. Humanity was designed to live in the community. Humanity was created in God’s image, male and female. Therefore, both male and female were created equal. Both man and

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[41] Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (Phoenix, AZ: Westminster John Knox Press, 1982), 97.

[42] James McKeown, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 45.

[43] Reformed Classicalist, “What is the Chief End of Man,” Reformed Classicalist, https://www.reformedclassicalist.com/home/q1-what-is-the-chief-end-of-man.

woman "bear the same divine print."[44] God gave both "man and woman together identical responsibilities: be fruitful and multiply (neither can do this alone), fill the earth and subdue it (subdue surely implies responsibility and leadership), have dominion over every living thing (dominion, like subdue, implies authority)."[45]

When God created man and woman, He blessed them to do what He commanded them to do in Genesis 1:28. Regarding the word blessed, Ross states, "The giving of a blessing bestowed prosperity with respect to fertility of land and fertility of life. The gift of divine blessing included the empowerment to achieve what was promised."[46]

The Fall and Its Consequences

Genesis chapter three records the fall of man. When Adam and Eve gave in to the temptation and deception of the serpent, sin entered the world. Based on scripture, sin has a wide range of meanings. Sin means 'the missing of a mark or goal' or 'the breach of a relationship' or 'ungodliness,' 'perversion' or 'rebellion.' However, the common theme of sin is an act that separates us from a holy God.[47] After Adam and Eve sinned against God by eating fruit from the tree that God told them not to eat from, it had a significant impact on the rest of humanity. Disobeying God ruptured the relationships between God and man and man and woman. In Genesis chapter four, we see Cain killing Abel. Cain

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[44] Alvera Mickelsen, "An Egalitarian View: There is Neither Male nor Female in Christ," in *Women in Ministry: Four Views*, eds. Bonnidell Clouse and Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1989), 182.

[45] Mickelsen, "An Egalitarian View," 173-220.

[46] Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing. A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 85.

[47] Sinclair Buchanan Ferguson, David F. Wright, and J. I. Packer, *New Dictionary of* Theology (Westmont, IL: IVP, 1988), 72.

commits a "premeditated murder" because God chose Abel's offering over his.[48] As wickedness runs wild throughout the earth, God responds by sending a flood to wipe out humanity because of their evil ways. He uses Noah to start over, but his son dishonors him. There are more events that took place in scripture because of sin.

Sin did not affect God's creation of humanity in His image. One of the purposes of God's creation of humanity was to reflect His image. But the serpent lured Adam and Eve by tempting them to grab divine equality with God. Consequently, they stumbled over into sin. Adam and Eve wanted to be God and wanted their eyes open rather than trusting in the God who created them. Sin did not obliterate the image of God, but it did cause the image of God in humanity to be "blurred."[49]

Sin distorted human relationships. After Adam and Eve sinned against God, both Adam and Eve sewed fig leaves together and covered themselves. They tried to hide themselves from God. God comes and confronts by calling Adam. God asks Adam, "Where are you?" (Gen. 3:9). Adam says, "I heard the sound of you in the garden" and that he was afraid because he was naked and he hid himself from God. When God asked "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree which I commanded you not to eat?" (Gen. 11). In response, Adam blames Eve for their sin against God. It is because of sin that mankind abdicated themselves from personal responsibility and accountability. Adam blamed God for giving him Eve. It was easier to blame someone

[48] Lonita Giovannini, *God's Original, Missional, Purposes for Humanity: Creation, Transformation, Restoration* (Wilmore, KY: Asbury Theological Seminary, 2013), 90.

[49] Eugene H. Merrill, "Image of God," DOTP, AAA.

else, including God. This shows that sin created a breakdown and disconnect between God and humanity.[50]

The original intentions that man and woman were to exercise were reversed because of the sin in the Garden of Eden. Man and woman went from ruling over God's creation to ruling over one another. Genesis 3:16 says, "To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you." "The oneness and equality between Adam and Eve" were destroyed, and the woman would desire "old intimacy and harmony" with her husband. However, he would rule over her.[51]

Humans were still able to be fruitful and multiply. However, sin disrupted the ability for humans to live forever. When Adam and Eve ate the fruit, it led to spiritual death, separation from God, and physical death. In Genesis Chapter Five, it gives the descendants from Adam to Noah. Adam lived for 130 years. Sin made death a reality for humanity. Humans cannot escape death. There is a "real deathliness that hovers over us and gnaws within us."[52]

There are some views on the fall of man. There is a liberal view, neo-orthodox view, and an orthodox view. The liberal view believes "that the fall was a legend and there was no truth or factual bases for the account of Genesis 3."[53] Stories in Genesis

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[50] Giovannini, *God's Original, Missional, Purposes for Humanity*, 23.

[51] Mickelsen, "An Egalitarian View," 173-220.

[52] Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2nd ed (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 47.

[53] Linton, *The Study of Man.*

were among the many myths that were told in the ancient Near East.[54] Dolansky states, "Scholars argue that Biblical myths arose within the context of other ancient Near Eastern myths that sought to explain the creation of the world. Alongside Biblical myths were Mesopotamian myths in which, depending on the account, the creator was Enlil, Mami or Marduk."[55] I disagree with this view. I believe the fall was real based on the human condition and the reality of our world today. I ascribe to the worlds of David in Psalm 51:5, which says, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Kidner, in this passage, states, "The new perspective on his (David) sin, as self-assertion against God, opens up a new self-knowledge. This crime (with Bathsheba), David now sees, was no freak event: it was in character; an extreme expression of the warped creature he had always been, and of the faulty stock he sprang up."[56] Isaiah saw the people's corruption and his own corruption (Is. 6:5).

Neo-orthodox believes that the fall of man was allegory, not factual. They believe that the fall was a made-up story that taught the lesson on sin.[57] I do not ascribe to this belief either. I do not believe that the Genesis account of the fall of man was a made-up story because the Bible proves that the fall was a historical account. This view is the orthodox view, which is the view I believe. Jesus Christ held to the literal and historical account of Genesis regarding man and woman becoming one flesh (Mt.19:4-5). The

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[54] Biblical Archaeology Society. "Biblical Topics Bible Interpretation Creation Stories in Genesis." Biblical Archaeology. https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-topics/bible-interpretation/creation-stories-in-genesis/.

[55] Shawna Dolansky, "The Multiple Truths of Myths," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 42, no. 1 (2016): 18-60.

[56] Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72* (Houston, TX: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 54.

[57] Linton, *The Study of Man.*

apostle Paul affirms the account of the fall of man (1 Cor.15:21-22). Furthermore, "if the fall of man was a myth, then Christ's death wasn't real" (Rom. 5:12-21).[58]

Redemption and Restoration in Christ

Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of true humanity. Dalcour states:

> The Scriptures proclaim the genuine and complete humanity of Jesus. (See Rom. 1:3; Heb. 2:14-17; 5:7-8.) "The Word was made flesh" (Jn. 1:14). Here, "flesh" does not merely mean a physical body but true and complete human identity. In whatever way that we define the essential components of humanity, Christ had them. He was human in body, soul, spirit, mind, and will. (See Mt. 26:38-39; Lk. 23:46; Acts 2:27-31.) Jesus was both the Son of God and the Son of man (Son of humanity). God's Spirit caused a virgin to conceive; therefore, the holy child to whom she gave birth is the Son of God (Lk. 1:35). Because "that holy thing" which was born of her was God manifest in the flesh, He is also the Son of man.[59]

The Gospel attests to the fact that Jesus was truly human. He got hungry. He needed to rest. He needed to sleep. And "on the Cross, he added to all the physical tortures the final agony of feeling God-forsaken."[60] In Jesus' humanity, his knowledge was limited per the will and purposes of God. The theological significance of Jesus becoming human through His life, death, and resurrection has several implications. The implications are: "Christ's humanity means that He is fallen humanity's representative. Christ's humanity means that He is fallen humanity's substitute, and Christ's humanity means that He is redeemed humanity's example."[61] The obedience of Jesus Christ satisfied God's wrath and reconciled sinful humanity back to a holy God.

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[58] Linton, *The Study of Man.*

[59] Edward L. Dalcour, *A Definitive Look at Oneness Theology: Defending the Tri-Unity of God* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005).

[60] Brown, *How to Think of Christ*, 7.

[61] The Gospel Coalition, "The Humanity of Christ," The Gospel Coalition, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-humanity-of-christ/.

However, there are some arguments against Jesus' true humanity. I only want to point out the most popular one against Jesus' true humanity. The mythicists argue that Jesus Christ did not exist and that the Gospel accounts are based on pagan myths. They believe that the evidence for Jesus's existence is weak. They claim that most of the ancient evidence for the existence of Jesus was produced by Christians and cannot be trusted. They do not believe in the Gospel accounts. They also believe that the testimony of Paul is fake. They claim that when Paul refers to Jesus' humanity, Paul "is speaking of a celestial being, whose birth and death were in the heavens, not on Earth."[62]

I disagree with this view because the Gospels are eyewitness accounts. Real people who walked with Jesus Christ wrote and orally transferred them. I do not believe that Jesus Christ and the disciples and authors would have gone through the persecution they endured for this to be a fairy tale. Ehrman, who is not a Christian, disagrees with mythicist' claims. He says, "The idea of Jesus's resurrection did not derive from pagan notions of a god simply being reanimated. It is derived from Jewish notions of resurrection as an eschatological event in which God would reassert his control over the world."[63] He further adds that "there is no unambiguous evidence that any pagans prior to Christianity believed in dying and rising gods, let alone that it was a widespread view held by lots of pagans in lots of times and places."[64] Mainstream scholarship views the Gospels as reliable. They also believe that the Gospels provide sufficient data for anyone

[62] Craig A. Evans, "Mythicism and the Public Jesus of History," Equip, https://www.equip.org/articles/mythicism-and-the-public-jesus-of-history.

[63] Bart D. Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist? The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth* (New York, NY: Harper One, 2012), 226.

[64] Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist?,* 230.

interested in knowing what Jesus did and what he taught.[65] When a sinner comes to faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, God begins a new work in them until the Day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6).

Eschatological Hope: The Future of Humanity

God's goal, through Jesus Christ and the work of His Spirit, is to conform all believers to the image of Jesus Christ. God is using all things to make this happen. He is in the business of making all things new (Rv. 21:5). The ultimate purpose is for humanity to dwell in God's presence, worship His Son, Jesus Christ, and commune with Him forever and ever.

Moses' Speech Impediment

In the dialogue between God and Moses in Exodus 4:10-16, Moses objects to God's call to use him to deliver His people from Pharaoh and Egyptian oppression because of his mouth and tongue being sluggish. In response to that, God said, in Exodus 4:11, "Who has made man's mouth?" In other words, God is the one who "determines man's abilities or disabilities."[66] The word made in Hebrew means placed or arranged. Cole's states:

> The phrase reads, if translated literally, 'who has set a mouth in man?' The thought behind the older translations 'who has created' is not wrong. God in sovereign power divides his gifts among men as he chooses. The step from this sovereignty to the thought of creation is very small indeed (although the Genesis verb 'create' is not actually used). The thought of creation is especially

[65] E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London, UK: SCM Press, 1985), 107.

[66] Hannah, "Exodus," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*.

> appropriate here, since it is God the Creator, the Lord of nature, who will give Moses the signs as credentials.[67]

Since Moses was created with a speech impediment, God is telling Moses that He can control or overrule man's weaknesses. We see that throughout the Bible. We see God using people with physical ailments for His glory and the good of others. We see it in the life of the Apostle Paul who writes, "And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom … and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. 2:1,4). I believe that after the fall, humanity dealt with limitations like physical ailments and disabilities. However, because God is sovereign and the Creator of humanity, He used them, which speaks to the efficacy of His power.

Conclusion

Despite theories and views that believe otherwise, God is the Creator of all humanity. Since we are created in the image of God, we are called to honor the divine dignity within one another regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity. Although Adam and Eve sinned against God, it did not stop God from being involved in the purpose and plan of redeeming His creation back to Him through the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Humanity has something to look forward to because of the humanity of Jesus Christ, who brought about redemption, restoration, and reconciliation for sinful humanity.

The importance of biblical anthropology helps us understand humanity's role as it relates to being in a relationship with God, with others, and with God's earth. Understanding why we were created and our ultimate purpose requires us to use the Bible

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[67] Cole, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary*, 179.

and Biblical Anthropology as a lens to shed an accurate life on humanities why. Although humans are born with limitations, God can overrule man's limitations for His glory and the good of others.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

Communication is a part of human interaction. It allows humans to express themselves and build relationships with other humans. However, to understand human expressions and how humans build relationships through communication, Communication Theory helps us to understand it. Communication Theory is a theory that explains how information is transmitted and understood between speaker and audience. It focuses on the significance of communication and the role it plays in conveying public information. The significance of Communication Theory is it helps us understand the complexity of communication, the influence of context, cultural factors, and the individual's interpretations. The purpose of this chapter is to explore Communication Theory. I will explore the background, a brief history, and evolution of Communication Theory, theoretical frameworks, and other aspects that will shed light on Communication Theory, its importance for the relationship between speaker and audience, and the communication disparity amongst Black men/boys.

History of Communication Theory

Communication Theory, formally known as Communication Study, consisted of four major periods: Classical, Medieval, Renaissance, and Enlightenment.[1] In the Classical Era, effective communication "was the cornerstone of classical education."[2] In ancient Greece and Rome, communication was the discipline that created and cultivated "skillful production and critical evaluation in all its usual settings--in law courts, in commerce and the professions, in ceremonial oratory, in diplomacy and public relations, in cultural and political debates."[3] One of the key figures during this era was Aristotle. Aristotle believed that rhetoric "is the study of communication and persuasion and different message or speech should be made for different audiences at different situations to get desired effects or to establish a propaganda."[4] Aristotle's communication model focused on the speaker and speech. It is divided into five elements: speaker, speech, occasion, audience, and effect.[5]

Aristotle used three communicative appeals regarding the art of persuasion. They are ethnos, logos, and pathos. Ethnos is the speaker's credibility. Aristotle called this the

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[1] Francesco Borghesi, "From the 'Renaissance' to the 'Enlightenment,'" *Intellectual History Review* 29, no. 1 (2019): 1-10.

[2] Condor DePaul, "Classical Rhetoric," Condor DePaul, https://condor.depaul.edu/dsimpson/pers/rhetoric.html.

[3] Condor DePaul, "Classical Rhetoric," Condor DePaul, https://condor.depaul.edu/dsimpson/pers/rhetoric.html

[4] Christof Rapp, "Aristotle's Rhetoric," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, eds., https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2023/entries/aristotle-rhetoric/>.

[5] Marketing Ninety-One, "Aristotle's Model of Communication: Definition and Examples," Marketing Ninety-One, https://www.marketing91.com/aristotles-model-of-communication/#:~:text=Aristotle's%20model%20of%20communication%20is%20mainly%20a%20speaker%20centered%20model,of%20the%205%20primary%20elements.

"persuasion through character." Ethos focuses on the characteristic of the speaker. Ethnos also focuses on the etiquette of the speaker. Ethnos also requires "proper use of tone, word choice, and respect for the views of the audience."[6] The second communication appeal is logos. Logos "refers to the content of an argument and its organization."[7]

Logos requires "forming meaningful connections between facts, supporting claims through factual evidence and statistics, and even the use of historical or literal analogies to create logical connections between ideas."[8] Logos focuses on structure and presentation. The last communication appeal is pathos. Pathos "means to appeal to the audience's values and beliefs such that they are more likely to be emotionally swayed to favor the speaker's argument."[9] For a speaker to be effective in pathos, they must seek to know and understand the values and beliefs of their audience. Doing so will keep the speaker from making offensive statements. It will also keep the speaker from making assumptions.

During the Medieval Era, Communication Theory focused on the "linguistic essence of the cosmos, is attentive to the transformative nature of understanding, and unifies the human person within a perceptual and poetic understanding of the world."[10]

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[6] Jaclyn Lutzke and Mary F. Henggeler, "The Rhetorical Triangle: Understanding and Using Logos, Ethos, and Pathos," Indiana University, https://www.lsu.edu/hss/english/files/university_writing_files/item35402. pdf.

[7] Press Books, "Open Rhetoric," Press Books, https://pressbooks.pub/openrhetoric/chapter/aristotles-rhetorical-appeals/.

[8] Su-Hie Ting, "Ethos, Logos, and Pathos in University Students' Informal Requests," *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies* 18, no. 1 (2018).

[9] Press Books, "Open Rhetoric," Press Books, https://pressbooks.pub/openrhetoric/chapter/aristotles-rhetorical-appeals/.

[10] Anthony M. Wachs, "The Triptych Tetrad: Marshall McLuhan's Neo-Medieval Communication Theory," PhD diss., Duquesne University, 2012.

However, most people in medieval Europe were illiterate.[11] For some time, the primary means of communication was delivering letters. However, due to the high illiteracy rate, writing letters was ineffective. Therefore, this era had to rely on oral communication.

During the rise of messenger services, medieval towns were known as the center of trade and commerce. Merchants and town councils created a network to exchange information about "market conditions, trade routes, and commercial opportunities." This form of communication was important for "governance of towns, facilitation communication between different town guilds, local authorities, and, in some cases, with ruling nobility or monarchs." This was the best and most effective way to ensure communication was efficient for all parties.[12]

Although there were limitations in effective communication, there were some major highlights regarding communication during this era. The Church heavily influenced Communication Theory. The Church viewed communication as a divine process where God was the source of truth. St. Augustine's work on *De Doctrina Christina* (On Christian Doctrine) influenced this era's view on communication as a means of interpreting and conveying divine truth. He emphasized the role of signs in forming and understanding communication.[13] Monastic networks also played a vital role in spreading Christianity. It is suggested that "monks traveled between monasteries and

[11] Medievalist, "How Messages Were Sent in the Middle Ages," Medievalist, https://www.medievalists.net/2023/06/messages-middle-ages/.

[12] History Medieval, "Medieval Communication: The Evolution of the Messenger," History Medieval, https://historymedieval.com/medieval-communication-the-evolution-of-the-messanger/.

[13] Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1996).

to distant land, carrying religious texts, relics, and news, thereby linking remote communities to the broader Christian world."[14]

During the Renaissance Era, mass communication played a vital role. Mass communication helped "the spread of ideas, particularly with the advent of the printing press, which transformed how information was shared and consumed."[15] However, ideas surrounding the style of communication gained heavy attention during this era. Petrus Ramus, who was a key figure in communication, paid attention to the idea of style. He suggested that "invention and arrangement did not fit the canon and should be the focus of logic, not rhetoric." He also questioned scholars before him because they believed that if you were a good man, you were a great communicator. However, he disagreed with that stance. Ramus believed that being a good man did not equate to being a great communicator.[16]

Rhetoric in the Renaissance Era had a great impact on Christian preaching. Some prominent figures made significant contributions to the rhetoric and the preaching tradition. George Trebizond (1395-1472) represented the beginning of Greek rhetoric at the universities of the West. Some of his greatest contributions are his *Rhetoricorium Libri Quinque* and *Five Books of Rhetoric*.[17] Others suggest that he became famous when

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[14] History Medieval, "Medieval Communication: The Evolution of the Messenger," History Medieval, https://historymedieval.com/medieval-communication-the-evolution-of-the-messanger/.

[15] Library Fiveable, "Renaissance Art Mass Communication," Library Fiveable, https://library.fiveable.me/key-terms/renaissance-art/mass-communication.

[16] Course Sidekick, "Study Guides Introduction to Communication," Course Sidekick, https://www.coursesidekick.com/communications/study-guides/introductiontocommunication/the-renaissance-1400-1600-ce.

[17] Thomas M. Conley, *Rhetoric in the European Tradition* (New York, NY: Longman Press, 1990), 110.

he was introduced to Hermogenes and Byzantine Greek rhetorical tradition into the Western tradition.[18] Another key figure was Erasmus (ca. 1469-1536). He was not a professional rhetorician but became a world-renowned scholar and one of the most controversial theologians of this era. Kennedy states, "his life's work was the revival of Christian piety through study of the classics; "his greatest achievement" was his edition of the Greek New Testament."[19] The last known figure was Francis Bacon (1565-1621). Bacon was known as a profound thinker and "the herald of the new age science." Bacon defines "the duty and office of rhetoric" as "to apply reason in imagination for the better moving of the will."[20] So, just like Plato and Aristotle, Bacon focuses on the function and purpose of communication and strongly emphasizes imagination.[21]

Communication during the Enlightenment Era is "known to be the profound intellectual change of rhetoric."[22] Some influential people impacted rhetoric during this era. Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), who was a rhetoric professor, studied Plato.[23] He was very "passionate about rhetoric and literature that he took it upon himself to write a response to Renee Descartes."[24] Thomas Sheridan (1719-1788) believed that "public

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[18] George A. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 195 and 196.

[19] Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition,* 205.

[20] Kenneth B. Stout, "Rhetoric in the Renaissance Era and Its Impact on Christian Preaching," *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary* 8, no. 1 (2005): 11-24.

[21] Stout, "Rhetoric in the Renaissance Era and Its Impact on Christian Preaching," 11-24.

[22] Hali Richardson, "Enlightenment in Rhetoric," Press Book, https://pressbooks.pub/historyofrhetoric/chapter/enlightenment-in-rhetoric/.

[23] Timothy Costelloe, "Giambattista Vico," Stanford, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/vico/?ref=refind.

[24] Hali Richardson, "Enlightenment in Rhetoric," Press Book, https://pressbooks.pub/historyofrhetoric/chapter/enlightenment-in-rhetoric/.

speaking had the power of paving the way for ultimate perfection within all the arts." He also "though that oratory was the pulpit and that it must effectively support religion against opposition."[25]

Another highlight of communication during the Enlightenment Era was some of the movements that improved communication. "The Elocutionary Movement focused on delivery and the art of teaching out loud."[26] One of the aspects of this was to focus on using body movements. It was a persuasive tool that sought to build connection and credibility with the audience.[27] This was also a movement that created body tactics to keep the audience engaged. Another movement was called the Belletristic Movement. This movement improved the aesthetic qualities of writing. It helped translate beautiful rhetoric like poetry, story, and drama into beautiful words. This movement "changed the way rhetoric was viewed as a study of invention and arguments to now being seen as the study of universal effects of language on readers and listeners."[28]

Core Concepts of Communication

There are several fundamentals of communication: message, medium, noise, feedback, and context. The message is what is being communicated. This can be both verbal and non-verbal. Medium is the means of communication. Marshall McLuhan

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[25] Wallace A. Bacon, "The Elocutionary Career of Thomas Sheridan (1719-1788)," *Communications Monographs* 31, no. 1 (1964): 1-53.

[26] Hali Richardson, "Enlightenment in Rhetoric," Press Book, https://pressbooks.pub/historyofrhetoric/chapter/enlightenment-in-rhetoric/.

[27] Wilbur Samuel Howell, "Sources of the Elocutionary Movement in England: 1700–1748," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 45, no. 1 (1959): 1-18.

[28] Hali Richardson, "Enlightenment in Rhetoric," Press Book, https://pressbooks.pub/historyofrhetoric/chapter/enlightenment-in-rhetoric/.

(1911-1980) says, “The medium is the message.” He is suggesting that “each medium has powerful tropes, strengths and limitations which profoundly shape the way a message is created and received.”[29]

Noise in communication is both literal and figurative. Noise can occur in the speaker, in the audience, and in the environment where communication is taking place. Feedback is what “helps us to calibrate how our message is being taken, and to make adjustments based on whether the feedback is positive or negative.”[30] Lastly, context “involves the setting, scene, and expectations of the individuals involved.”[31]

Theoretical Framework

There were some key milestones in Communication Theory. One of those key milestones is called the Shannon-Weaver Model. This model was developed in 1949 by Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver. The model consists of five elements: an information source, a transmitter, a channel, a receiver, and a destination.[32] The information source (sender) is the originator of the message; the encoder (transmitter) converts the message into signals; the channel (noise) is a transformation from encoder to decoder. “During this process the messages may be distracted or affected by physical noise like horn sounds, thunder and crowd noise or encoded signals that may distract in

[29] Marshall McLuhan, “The Medium is the Message (1964),” in *Crime and Media* (Louisville, KY: Routledge, 2019), 20-31.

[30] Arbor, “Fundamental of Communication: Eight Basic Concepts and Definitions,” Arbor, https://online.arbor.edu/news/fundamentals-communication-8-basic-concepts-and-definitions.

[31] S. McLean, *The Basics of Interpersonal Communication* (Boston, MA: Allyn Bacon, 2005).

[32] Oxford Reference, “Shannon and Weaver’s Model,” Oxford Reference, https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100459436.

the channel during the transmission process which affect communication flow."[33] The decoder (reception) converts the signals into the message the receiver (destination) is the person or audience who is receiving the message. Based on this model, "each part of the model is important, and the correct or incorrect use of each part can result in communication success or communication failure."[34]

Another model that became a milestone in Communication Theory was Symbolic Interactionism. Symbolic Interactionism suggests that "people respond to elements of their environment according to the subjective meanings they attach to those elements, such as meanings being created and modified through social interaction involving symbolic communication with other people."[35] Symbolic Interactionism consists of five elements: symbols, establishing meanings, developing one's views, and communicating with each other and society.[36] Symbolic Interactionism is a theoretical framework in sociology that describes how societies are created and maintained through repeated actions of people.[37] In other words, people in the world and each individual through social interaction/communication via communication and symbols. Both models have

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[33] Oxford Reference, "Shannon and Weaver's Model," Oxford Reference, https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100459436.

[34] Jim Marteney, "The Communication Model," Social Sci-Libre Texts, https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Communication/Argument_and_Debate/Arguing_Using_Critical_Thinking_(Marteney)/02%3A_Communicating_An_Argument/2.03%3A_The_Communication_Model.

[35] Charlotte Nickerson, "Symbolic Interactionism Theory and Examples," Simply Psychology, https://www.simplypsychology.org/symbolic-interaction-theory.html.

[36] Charlotte Nickerson, "Symbolic Interactionism Theory and Examples," Simply Psychology, https://www.simplypsychology.org/symbolic-interaction-theory.html.

[37] M. J. Carter and C. Fuller, "Symbolic Interactionism," *Sociopedia* 1, no. 1 (2015): 1-17.

cemented their place in Communication Theory because they helped, influenced, and improved how communication can be shared and received between speaker and audience.

Framework Across Disciplines

There are some disciplines that helps shed light on communication between person to person and speaker to audience. There are psychological perspectives (Cognitive Dissonance, Behaviorism), sociological approaches (Structural Functionalism, Systems Theory), and linguistics (Speech Act Theory, semiotics).

Cognitive Dissonance Theory says that humans seek and attempt to reduce their cognitive discomfort.[38] This theory was developed by Leon Festinger (1919-1989) in the 1950s. Cognitive Dissonance Theory believes that when an individual learns new information or encounter new experiences, the compartmentalize it based on their presuppositions. If it does not fit their beliefs and values, the individual tries to avoid a conversation or a speaking opportunity to prevent them from experiencing discomfort.[39] Therefore, to avoid discomfort, a person will select their experiences based on selective exposure, selective interpretation, and selective retention. Selective exposure is only seeking information that is based on one's belief. Selective interpretation is understanding and interpreting information through the lens of beliefs. Selective retention is only remembering what one wants to remember based on one's beliefs.[40]

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[38] David Vaidis, *Cognitive Dissonance Theory* (London, UK: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[39] Learn Saylor, "Interpersonal Communication," Learn Saylor, https://learn.saylor.org/mod/book/view.php?id=51204&chapterid=30840.

[40] John L. Cotton, "Cognitive Dissonance in Selective Exposure," *Selective Exposure to Communication* (2013): 11-33.

Behaviorism Communication Theory explores the principles of behavior in communication. Behavior is a "direct reaction to environmental stimuli, where the communicator act as the stimulus to elicit a desired response from the audience."[41] Behaviorism also focuses on behavior that is learned through conditioning. There are two types of conditioning: classical conditioning and operant conditioning. Classical conditioning "is when behavior is learned in response to stimulus that is not naturally associated with behavior."[42] An example of this is a person being exposed to loud noises, and over time, that person develops a fear of loud noises. The other condition is operant conditioning. Operant conditioning "is when behavior is learned in response to a stimulus that is not naturally associated with that behavior."[43] An example of operant conditioning is if a person gets a reward for doing something, they will have the motivation and inspiration to do it again.

However, some suggest that Behaviorism Communication Theory is very simplistic. Critics feel that behaviorism only focuses on behavior, which ignores the mind and the emotions. Behaviorism is limited because it does not encapsulate the complexities of human learning. Humans may not always possess the skills to solve problems and make decisions.[44] I would agree with these critics because it is narrow in its focus.

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[41] National University, "Behaviorism in Education: What is Behavioral Learning Theory," National University, https://www.nu.edu/blog/behaviorism-in-education/.

[42] National University, "Behaviorism in Education: What is Behavioral Learning Theory," National University, https://www.nu.edu/blog/behaviorism-in-education/.

[43] National University, "Behaviorism in Education: What is Behavioral Learning Theory," National University, https://www.nu.edu/blog/behaviorism-in-education/.

[44] John Limber, "Good-Bye behaviorism!" *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 1, no. 4 (1978): 581-583.

Structural Functionalism in communication views communication as an act to create and maintain social order, stability, and cohesion. It sees communication as an important mechanism "for integrating individuals into the larger social system and ensuring its smooth function."[45] Some of the key points about structural functionalism in communication are surveillance, correlation, and transmission of culture. Surveillance focuses on gathering information about the environment to identify potential threats and opportunities. Correlation coordinates societal response to environmental changes or challenges. Transmission of culture focuses on communicating social norms, values, and beliefs.[46] However, there are some criticisms of structural functionalism in communication. Some say that there is an overemphasis on stability. Critics argue that it can "overlook social conflict, power imbalance, and the potential for communication to drive social change."[47] Critics also say that this theory can neglect of individuals by downplaying how they can shape communication practices.[48]

Systems Theory focuses on the communication system instead of its individual parts. This theory seeks to achieve insights into communication. Systems Theory is a "systematic approach to organizational communication expands the basic model of sender-receiver to feature communication networks; this explains how systems adapt to

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[45] Courses Lumen Learning, "Structural Functional Theory," Courses Lumen Learning, https://courses.lumenlearning.com/wm-introductiontosociology/chapter/structural-functional-theory/.

[46] Nancy Kingsbury and John Scanzoni, "Structural-Functionalism," in *Sourcebook of Family Theories and Methods: A Contextual Approach* (Boston, MA: Springer, 1993), 195-221.

[47] Joe Hudson, "Structural Functional Theory, Social Work Practice and Education,' *J. Soc. and Soc. Welfare* 5 (1978): 481.

[48] Joe Hudson, "Structural Functional Theory, Social Work Practice and Education,' *J. Soc. and Soc. Welfare* 5 (1978): 481.

their environments."[49] Some of the key aspects of Systems Theory of communication are interconnectedness, explanation, context and culture, organizational communication, and public relations. Systems Theory examines communication as a system of interconnected parts instead of looking at it as an isolated event. It explains human connection instead of trying to predict it. It recognizes that much of the communication from an individual is based on a given culture and context. It explains how organizational communication creates stability and control. Lastly, as it relates to public relations, it helps practitioners evaluate communication as a part of a larger whole.[50]

However, like the other theories mentioned in this section, critics believe System Theory is very simplistic. They suggest that it fails to offer "explanations for specific communication phenome due to its focus on interconnectedness without addressing the nuances of individual elements within a system."[51]

Speech Act Theory in communication is "a philosophical framework that examines how language can be used to perform actions, not just to convey information."[52] Philosophers J. L. Austin (1911-1960) and John Searle (1932-Present), are the ones who developed this theory with the influence of Austin's book *How to Do Things with Words*. The purpose of this theory is to communicate that communication is

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[49] Robert L. Heath and Jennings Bryant, *Human Communication Theory and Research: Concepts, Contexts, and Challenges* (Philadelphia, PA: Routledge, 2013), 55.

[50] Adnan Almaney, "Communication and the Systems Theory of Organization," *The Journal of Business Communication* 12, no. 1 (1974): 35-43.

[51] Anita Kihlström, "Luhmann's System Theory in Social Work: Criticism and Reflections," *Journal of Social Work* 12, no. 3 (2012): 287-299.

[52] K. Allan, P. Lamarque, and R. Asher, "Speech Act Theory: Overview," *Concise Encyclopedia of Philosophy of Language* (1997): 454-466.

not just words with meaning but also actions that can have consequences based on the context and speaker's motives.[53]

There are three components of the speech act. They are Locutionary Act, Illocutionary Act, and Perlocutionary Act. A Locutionary Act is the act of saying something. Illocutionary Act is the act of requesting, promising, or warning by the speaker. Perlocutionary Act is achieved by the utterance on the listener, like persuading them or upsetting them.[54]

What makes Speech Act Theory important is that it seeks to understand the communication of the speaker to determine their motives. It helps us analyze language and how it is used in varying contexts. It also creates an awareness for speakers to develop a sensitivity to choose words carefully with the objective of achieving and accomplishing what they want when given a presentation.[55]

There are critics who say that Speech Act Theory oversimplifies the complexities of communication. They say that it neglects the impact of context and social factors. Other scholars argue that speech communication focuses too much on the speaker's intention.[56] Consequently, it overlooks the audience's ability to interpret and understand what the speaker is saying. I agree with this stance because public speaking is a marriage between the speaker and the audience. Yes, the speaker is the primary focus of what he or

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[53] Michelle Walther, "Speech Act Theory," Science Direct, https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/psychology/speech-act-theory.

[54] Mikhail Kissine, "Locutionary, Illocutionary, Perlocutionary," *Language and Linguistics Compass* 2, no. 6 (2008): 1189-1202.

[55] Britannica, "Speech Act Theory," Britannica, https://www.britannica.com/topic/speech-act-theory.

[56] Jens Allwood, "A Critical Look at Speech Act Theory," *Logic, Pragmatics and Grammar* (1977): 53-69.

she communicates. However, the audience is just as important, if not more, because they are the ones who attend presentations to learn, grow, and develop.

Semiotics is "the study of signs and symbols and their use of interpretation."[57] It studies the roles of signs and the role they play in a social and cultural context. Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) and the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) are considered the founders of semiotics.[58] There is one aspect of Semiotic Theory. It is called a sign or signifier. Sign, according to this theory, means the smallest unit of meaning.[59] For a sign to be created or defined, it is suggested that you need a signifier and signified. A signifier is "any material or physical form of the sign - the object that exists."[60] A signified is "a cultural or social concept that a signifier refers to - what it means."[61] There are three types of signs. They are icon, index, and symbols. The icon is a connection and physical resemblance to the signified thing. The index is a representation of the relationship between the signified and the signifier. Lastly, symbols have an apparent connection. But icon and index can become a symbol over time.[62]

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[57] Thomas Albert Sebeok, *Signs: An Introduction to Semiotics* (Toronto, CA: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 45.

[58] John Deely, *Introducing Semiotics: Its History and Doctrine*, vol. 287 (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982), 100.

[59] Charles Sanders Peirce and Justus Buchler, "Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs," in *Philosophical Writings of Peirce,* Justus Buchler, ed. (New York, NY: Dover, 1955), 100.

[60] Codruța Porcar, "Sign and Meaning: A Semiotic Approach to Communication," *Journal for Communication and Culture* 1, no. 1 (2011).

[61] Porcar, "Sign and Meaning: A Semiotic Approach to Communication."

[62] Albert Atkin. "Icon Index Symbol," in *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of the Language Sciences* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 97.

One of the criticisms of Semiotic Theory is it depends heavily on abstraction. They also suggest that there is a lack of empirical grounding. Some feel like there is a strong tendency to ignore signs' social and historical contexts. Semiotics is often criticized as "imperialistic."[63] John Sturrock says that the "dramatic extension of the semiotic field, to include the whole of the culture, is looked on by those suspicious of it as a kind of intellectual terrorism, overfilling our lives with meanings."[64] I agree with Sturrock. To overlook the social and historical context can create oppression and ignorance when you overlook or deny the power dynamics. This is based on the context and how social and historical influences inspired or influenced that specific context.

Emotional Intelligence and Non-Verbal

Emotional intelligence and non-verbal communication play a vital role in a public speaking context. Emotional Intelligence (EI) "is the ability to understand your emotions as well as the emotions of others."[65] Non-verbal communication plays a vital role in emotional intelligence. Practicing nonverbal communication requires you to focus on individual differences in your abilities to communicate nonverbally. Riggio says, "This ability, or skill, approach is skin to a personality perspective in that it focuses on

[63] Daniel Chandler, "Semiotics for Beginners," Visual Memory, http://visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/S4B/sem11.html.

[64] John Sturrock, *Structuralism* (London, UK: Paladin, 1986), 32.

[65] Bea Timmermans, "Emotional Intelligence and Communication," Exhibit Concepts, https://exhibitconcepts.com/emotional-intelligence-communication/.

individual differences in the sending (encoding), receiving (decoding), and regulation (management) of nonverbal communication."[66]

A marriage between emotional intelligence and non-verbal communication can create effective communication when stewarded properly. Strong non-verbal communication and emotional intelligence will allow speakers to communicate with effectiveness and authenticity, which results in creating and cultivating positive interactions and responses from the audience.[67]

Disparities of Communication Among Black Males

Black males deal with disparities that prevent them from being comfortable and confident speaking publicly. Some of the disparities are cultural stereotypes, misrepresentation, and educational barriers. Black males are often stereotyped as being aggressive and criminally inclined, and their actions are categorized as aggressive.[68] And behaviors by Black males are perceived as threatening.[69] The stereotypes of Black males can be misinterpreted because assertiveness or ambition can be misinterpreted by counterparts. Misinterpretations can lead to misunderstandings in both personal and professional settings.

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[66] Ronald E. Riggio, "Nonverbal Skills and Abilities," *The Sage Handbook of Nonverbal Communication* (2006): 79-96.

[67] Jacob Heike, et al., "Nonverbal Signals Speak Up: Association between Perceptual Nonverbal Dominance and Emotional Intelligence," *Cognition and Emotion*, no. 5 (2013): 783-799.

[68] B. L. Duncan, "Differential Social Perception and Attribution of Intergroup Violence: Testing the Lower Limits of Stereotyping of Blacks," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 34 (1976): 590–598.

[69] H. A. Sagar and J. W. Schofield, "Racial and Behavioral Cues in Black and White Children's Perceptions of Ambiguously Aggressive Acts," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 39 (1980): 590–598.

Misrepresentation is a disparity that Black males deal with. Social media has impacted how Black men are perceived and unrealistic expectations have been given to them. Scholars have given several suggestions that leads to social media distortions:

> *Producer bias* — Most obviously, those responsible for media content may at times present a distorted, inaccurate view because of their own conscious or unconscious biases and stereotypes.
>
> *Incorrect assumptions about audiences* — Scholars suggest cases in which portrayals are incomplete or distorted because producers of media content carry faulty assumptions about the composition of their audiences and their audiences' preferences. For instance, video game producers, who tend not to be African-American males themselves, underestimate how many black males and others who would identify with black protagonists play the games.
>
> *Audience preferences* — In some cases, content producers may be responding to accurate assessments of their audiences' comfort zones with a certain range of presentations of black males — i.e., ones that confirm their own fears and prejudices or reassure them that black males are not achieving "undue" power and status.
>
> *Lack of input from black constituents* — One of the factors seen as most significant by scholars is the paucity of African-American television station owners, producers, journalists and experts invited to contribute content, etc.
>
> *Political motivations to traffic in stereotypes* — Portrayals are also distorted by some (often white and/or conservative) communicators' interests in tapping into racial bias in order to promote or discredit various policies (e.g., more prisons, less welfare).[70]

These suggestions have been shouldered by Black males. Consequently, it kept their humanity and dignity from being accepted, celebrated, and valued.

Another disparity that Black males deal with is barriers in education. Two reasons why Black males deal with barriers in education is because of teacher perception and lack of Black representation in education. Black male behavior is often related to

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[70] Opportunity Agenda, "Media Representations and Impact on the Lives of Black Men and Boys," The Opportunity Agenda, https://opportunityagenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2011.11.30-Report-Media-Representation-and-Impact-on-the-Lives-of-Black-Men-and-Boys-FINAL.pdf.

miscommunication or cultural differences.[71] There is a shortage of Black male educators in the United States, and it is suggested that this trend is not going to change anytime soon.[72] Seven percent of all public school teachers are Black.[73] Boser (2014) says "that every state in the United States has a higher percentage of students of color than teachers of colors."[74] Studies show that Black male teachers cite previous negative school experiences and low expectations for Black males as it relates to their roles and responsibilities when it comes to educating Black males.[75]

Conclusion

This chapter explored Communication Theory by highlighting its evolution of the core values of communication. It also highlighted how certain approaches and frameworks increase our understanding of communication and the importance of it as it relates to human interaction, and in the context of presenter/audience. Communication Theory and other approaches that relate to communication provide us with ways to improve communication. Although there are some limitations, mainly because of its

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[71] Lisa A. Harrison and Cynthia Willis Esqueda, "Race Stereotypes and Perceptions About Black Males Involved in Interpersonal Violence," *Journal of African American Men* (2001): 81-92.

[72] Molly Mee, Jamie Silverman, and Marilyn Hartzell, "'Testing the Mettle:' Advantages and Challenges for Black Males Entering the Teaching Profession," *Journal of African American Males in Education (JAAME)* (2024).

[73] S. Taie and R. Goldring, *Characteristics of Public and Private Elementary and Secondary School Teachers in the United States: Results From the 2017–18 National Teacher and Principal Survey First Look* (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics, 2020), 142.

[74] U. Boser, *Teacher Diversity Revisited: A New State-By-State Analysis* (Washington, D.C.: Center for American Progress, 2014), 12.

[75] R. Goings and M. Bianco, "It's Hard to be Who You Don't See: An Exploration of Black Male High School Students' Perspectives on Becoming Teachers," *Urban Review* 48, no. 4 (2016): 628–646.

oversimplification, Communication Theory can still contribute to how we communicate and the effects of it when a presenter is presenting to an audience.

There is a lack of comfort and confidence in Black males regarding public speaking. However, my goal is to use this interdisciplinary approach to increase engagement, involvement, confidence, and comfort in Black males so that they can be effective communicators. Ultimately, the unity of disciplines in Communication Theory helps us understand human interaction and the importance of it. It also helps us how we can connect and communicate with one another despite diverse social and cultural contexts.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of my Doctor of Ministry project has been based on a need to create a space where young adult Black males ages eighteen to twenty-four can grow their confidence and their comfort so that they can be more willing engaging in public speaking and public ministry. Journeying through this program has allowed me to see the need and to create a possible solution for St. Mark Baptist Church to break the barriers of lack of confidence and lack of comfort to make young adult Black males more engaged and involved when public speaking opportunities present themselves. The lack of space for practicing public speaking for young adult Black males has led to seeing more women and older adults to get up and speak or to do the welcome or to do the devotional when it is time to open for worship. This project was birthed from my personal experience and desire to see more involvement and engagement from young adult Black males engaging in public speaking and public ministry.

My project was shaped by the Synergy Chapter where I discovered that his speech impediment played a role in his lack of confidence and lack of comfortability engaging in public speaking and public ministry that was rooted in fear. One of the greatest fears of humanity is public speaking. Exodus 4:10-17 was used as a biblical framework, showing how Moses's reluctance to go and speak on behalf of God to liberate His people was

rooted in fear that expressed itself as lack of confidence and comfort that showed up in the excuses, he gave God. However, God reassured Moses that He would be with him, and Aaron would accompany him to do the task that God was sending him to do. This creation of this project was to help young adult Black males overcome their fear and to create and cultivate confidence and comfortability so that they can use the voice that God gave them to speak in ministry and in their sphere of influence.

The project is grounded in and directed by the synergy, biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary framework. Exodus 4:10-17 is the biblical framework that connected to my fear, lack of confidence and comfort because of my speech impediment. The historical example I used was Philip Melanchthon who was a German reformer, scholar, and a close friend and collaborator of Martin Luther, who also had a speech impediment and had fears relating to public speaking. The theological framework focused on anthropology which speaks to man's creation. I used this framework to highlight the divine worth, dignity, creativity, and authority of humanity and how that translate to the fact that the voice that God gives reflects those qualities. The interdisciplinary framework highlighted what communication was, barriers to effective communication, how to steward nonverbal communication, and Aristotle's framework.

All these foundation chapters served as the framework, guidance, and implementation for the six-week training of this project. This project was created to give young adult Black males the knowledge, tools and information needed to manage or overcome their fear of public speaking and to grow their confidence and comfort so that they can manage their fears rather than be overwhelmed by it. Pre- and post-surveys, group discussions, and journal reflections were tools that were used for evaluation for me

and the participants. These qualitative methods helped me to see, observe, and measure how each activity for each session was affecting each participant. This final project demonstrated a need for a program or a ministry for young adult Black males ages eighteen to twenty-four.

The purpose of this chapter is to highly the project analysis of my project implementation. It will highlight the need for a program or ministry that creates space to help people overcome their fears of public speaking. The work that was done in this project will give the necessary fundamental knowledge, tools and information that can be applied so that anyone who participates with have the confidence and comfort that they need to engage in public speaking, public ministry, and/or in their respective arena.

Methodology

This project was designed to help young adult Black males ages eighteen to twenty-four at St. Mark Baptist Church manage or overcome their fears by giving them knowledge and tools to cultivate confidence and comfort so that they can engage in public speaking and public ministry. St. Mark Baptist Church does not have a program or ministry for this population to do what I aimed to do with his project. The goal of this project implementation was to implement a program or ministry for young adult Black males so that they can have a space to practice public speaking. The project consisted of a six-week training that went over my foundational chapters and several topics relating to public speaking to equip and empower the voices of young adult Black males. Although the program for to impact the participant, it also created and cultivated a community where each participant created a connection with one another. This connection gave way

to meaningful discussions, feedback, and constructive criticism that also helped with cultivating confidence and comfort within one another.

Project Design and Approach

This project used a qualitative approach. I used pre- and post-surveys, discussion questions, and journal reflections. The pre- and post-surveys were used to see how each participant felt about their confidence and comfort level relating to public speaking before the start of the project and after. The set of discussion questions were used to create dialogue to hear each participant's perspective, to create meaningful dialogues, and to get each participant out of their comfort zone. The journal reflection was used so that each participant could give thoughtful reflection on how they did and felt about their presentations. These tools helped me see the effectiveness of the six-week training.

Participant Learning Through the Four Foundational Pillars

Here are the four foundational pillars of the project: biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary. Each foundation served as a framework on how to create and cultivate confidence and comfort for public speaking and public ministry. Each foundation also highlighted the fears of public speaking and the barriers to effective communication.

Biblical Foundations

The text for the Biblical Foundations Chapter was Exodus 4:10-17, which states:

> But Moses said to the LORD, "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue" Then the LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? 12: Now therefore go,

> and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak. 13: But he said, "Oh, my Lord, please send someone else." Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and he said, "Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know he can speak well. Behold, he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth, and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what to do. 16: He shall speak for you to the people, and he shall be your mouth, and you shall be as God to him. And take what's in your hand this staff, with which you shall do the signs" (ESV).

This passage served as a framework to highlight the fear, doubts, and insecurities of Moses. Participants were able to connect with and reflect on how they had similar reluctances or resistances like Moses. They expressed how they, too, had fears and questioned themselves, and the reason they were afraid to engage in public speaking. Considering Aaron, I highlighted how the project and how each participant can serve as a support system to help each participant overcome their fears and feel more confident and comfortable giving a presentation.

Historical Foundations

Philip Melancthon was used as a historical example. He was known as the "Teacher of Germany" for his role in shaping Protestant education. He, too, struggled with a speech impediment that made public speaking hard, and was at times fearful. He lived in a time where eloquence and exceptional articulation was valued for preaching and teaching. However, he faced insecurity, but he didn't let that silence his voice. I used my story as an example to show that no matter the disabilities or fears, God can use your voice. His writings, preaching, teachings, and mentorship became his voice. I also used his story as an example on how God can turn one's limitation into

influence. The participants left with the encouragement that their voice matters, even if it sounds different.

Theological Foundations

Anthropology was used to create an understanding on how humanity is made in the image of God. Participants learned that their voice reflects God's creativity. Participants were encouraged with the truth that just like Moses, God would be with them when they must engage in public speaking. The participants also learned that because of sin in Genesis Chapter Three, it distorted their image, lowered their confidence and caused humanity to live in fear rather than confidence. They were also informed that because of Jesus Christ and His life, death, burial, and resurrection, their identity has been restored. And because of Him and what He did, they are no longer defined by insecurities, stereotypes, or fear.

Interdisciplinary Foundations

Communication Theory was the discipline that was used to help the participants understand what communication was, barriers to effective communication, nonverbal communication, and Aristotle's Rhetorical tools (ethos, pathos, and logos). Participants were able to learn how to use Aristotle's Rhetorical tolls to blend credibility, emotion, and logic so that when they speak, the audience they are speaking to will listen. Each session consisted of my teaching, discussion, and preparation for their presentations at the end of the project in week six. When each participant gave their presentation, the contextual associates were present to watch and give constructive feedback.

Participants

The participants were young adult Black males aged eighteen to twenty-four at St. Mark Baptist Church. These participants signed up when I sent out an e-blast and posted on the church's social media platform. Each participant expressed a desire to learn how to be better public speakers and how to overcome the fears and anxieties they feel when they do have to speak publicly.

Data Collection

Pre-Survey

At the beginning of the project, participants completed a pre-survey that was created to see how confident and comfortable they were when they engaged in public speaking. They were to give thoughtful responses so that I could see strengths and weaknesses of each participant. In addition, I wanted to see how he could help each participant grow as a public speaker, and how to manage fears and anxieties, and grow in confidence and comfortability.

Discussions Questions and Journal Reflections

Discussions questions were implemented to create thought-provoking discussions between me and the participants. After each participants gave their final speeches, they were asked to answer the questions that allowed them to reflect on how they felt about their final speeches, and how they think they did on their final speeches.

Post-Survey

The post-survey consisted of the same questions as the pre-survey. However, these responses were to see how the sessions improved, neutralized or lower their confidence and comfort. The methods of data collection that I used were to see whether the sessions that was designed helped the participants, stagnated the participants, or hindered the participants.

Data Analysis

Pre-survey and post-survey were compared to see the growth from week one to week six. Discussions were analyzed to see how confident and comfortable each participant was with engaging in dialogue with one another. Journal reflections on the final presentations to see how each participant felt about their performance. The analysis was utilized to see how each participant felt at the beginning of the project, at the mid-way point, and at the conclusion of the project.

Rationale for the Approach

The purpose of this project implementation was to create a context that creates and cultivates confidence and comfort to engage in public speaking. This project was birthed from the synergy, biblical, historical, theological and interdisciplinary foundation papers. Fear is often associated with public speaking. Therefore, I wanted to create and implement a ministry for young adult Black males to practice public speaking and to receive constructive feedback so that adjustments and improvements can be made. My personal fears, and at times, the lack of confidence and comfort because of my speech

impediment, and the need of young adult Black males ages eighteen to twenty-four is what determined my approach towards the project.

Providing a public speaking ministry will give young adult Black males the desire to engage in public speaking so that they can be more involved in public ministry. This consist of calling the congregation to worship, reading scripture, prayer, etc.

Limitations

The time frame of the project was not long enough to truly measure if each participant grew in their confidence and comfortability engaging in public speaking. It will require more time and more public speaking opportunities to see growth and improvement. Another limitation is attendance and retention. There was one participant who could not come until the fourth session because of work, school, and family responsibilities. Another limitation is diversity in backgrounds and skill levels. Although all participants attended college, they classified differently. Some attended PWIs, one attended an HBCU, another was in law school. There was one participant who seemed very confident and comfortable engaging in public speaking, while some were nervous and anxious. Another limitation is limited sample size. With the amount of time that was allotted for the project and the sessions, it may not have been enough to discover significant and substantial evaluation. The last limitation is personal bias in the evaluations. Perception is a component to consider when evaluating one's confidence. So, to keep from looking like one has low-confidence or low self-esteem, a participant can evaluate themselves to keep from expressing accurate evaluation about themselves.

Ethical Considerations

This project followed the ethical guidelines to ensure all participants felt safe during the duration of the project. Respect was promoted and enforced. No participant disrespected one another or felt disrespected. Stereotypes were avoided to appreciate each participant's unique style of voice. There is a vulnerability that's associated with public speaking. Therefore, there was a licensed counselor that was present if there were any mental or emotional triggers. Everything was kept confidential. There was no information collected or utilized that would have been used to abuse a participant.

The purpose of the project was communicated in the first session. I clearly communicated the requirements and the expectations of the program. I also communicated the importance of participation in activities and discussions, and that each participant had to give a final speech in Week Six.

Implementation

This project consisted of six weeks. Each session went over each of my foundational chapters that spoke through the lens of overcoming fear and creating and cultivating confidence and comfort so that the participants can be more willing to engage in public speaking and public ministry. However, there were some adjustments to the scheduling of the project because one of the participants could not attend all sessions. Therefore, I adjusted so that the participant would not be too far behind when he started attending.

Session One

The first session of the focus group included introductions of the participants, explained the reason and purpose of the project, and outlined requirements and expectations for the six-week program. Each participant shared their background, college they attended, and occupation, and personal challenges regarding public speaking. The main theme expressed by all participants was they all felt anxious when speaking in front of others. All the participants expressed that they wanted to grow more comfortable in public speaking. They wanted to learn how to embrace and manage their fears and anxieties. They wanted to improve their eye contact, pacing, projection, and clarity. Lastly, they wanted to learn how to confidently engage audiences.

I shared my own experience growing up with a speech impediment, which is what deeply shaped his calling to ministry and the creation of this project. I communicated that the aim of the project and focus group is to empower young Black males to gain confidence and comfort in public speaking through weekly activities, training, and practice.

The participants were informed of commitment expectations, which were to attend weekly sessions, participate actively, complete pre- and post-surveys, and journal reflections on the final speech. They were informed that the final requirement for the project was to deliver a speech. They were also informed that there would be a hybrid format for flexibility. The session concluded with prayer, distribution of consent forms, and pre-surveys. We concluded with prayer.

Session Two

I invited the group to share praise reports or prayer requests, and then we prayed. After prayer, we revisited the purpose of the project for the sake of reiteration and emphasis. We went over the Biblical Foundations Chapter, where the passage of scripture was Exodus 4:10-17. We examined the conversation between Moses and God, in which Moses expressed fear and insecurity about speaking publicly. There were some key truths that stood out from this text. The first one was self-doubt. Moses said he was "slow of speech and tongue." I made the connection to the participants on how we wrestle with the feeling of our voices not being valued, anxiety about not being heard or respected because of age, the belief that others are more qualified, and the pressure of wanting to be perfect speakers. The group openly discussed personal fears, age and experience, identity, and comparisons to well-known preachers and public speakers.

The second truth that we discussed was God's promise that He would be with Moses. God reminded Moses that He created man's mouth, and that He equips those He calls. I concluded by reminding the participants that God does not call the perfect, He calls the willing. The third truth we discussed was the importance of community and support systems. Since Moses still hesitated because of fear and insecurity, God sent his brother Aaron to help him speak. We connected this to the importance of brotherhood and how growth happens in brotherhood, not isolation. We also talked about how feedback from one another can build confidence. Lastly, we made the connection that public speaking can be less intimidating when we support each other. I tied the purpose of this focus group to serving or functioning as "Aaron."

All the participants wrote down these takeaways for practical empowerment: your voice matters, even when you doubt it, God equips you for what he calls you to, support systems elevate your confidence, and confidence and comfort grow through practice, not perfection. We concluded on the importance of being authentically you.

We went over this historical figure, which was Philip Melanchthon. As I mentioned earlier, he was a German Reformer with a speech impediment who struggled with personal fears and insecurities. However, despite his shortcomings relating to his personal fears and insecurities, he became one of the most influential preachers and teachers in Christian history.

We had group reflection, and one of the breakthrough thoughts that was shared was: "Why not me? There will always be someone 'better,' but that doesn't erase my voice or my calling." Before concluding, we reiterated that every participant has a voice that is valuable and can be used, each participant has experiences and perspectives that is needed and necessary for their generation, and each participant can grow and develop through consistent practice and a strong community. We concluded with prayer.

Session Three

I invited the group to share praise reports or prayer requests, and then we prayed. We went over the theological foundations paper, which is the study of anthropology. We went over that public speaking is rooted in the biblical identity of the speaker. We discussed the Imago Dei, the image of God. We went over several truths: every participant has worth, dignity, and God-given authority, every participant has a unique voice, tone, and style that reflects the creativity of God, and we are not created to imitate

someone else, but we are called to speak through our authentic expressions. We went over that sin, according to Genesis chapter three, distorted confidence and identity that allowed shame, fear, and insecurity in an individual. However, through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, our identity is renewed, and we can find our confidence in Him. Therefore, we are not defined by our fears or our insecurities. Because of whom we are in Christ, we can speak from who we are in Him rather than allowing our fears and insecurities to keep us from using our voice to speak.

We went over the interdisciplinary chapter, which is Communication Theory. We went over the definition of communication, which is the communication of ideas, feelings, and meaning. Communication Theory includes five key components: speaker, message, channel, receiver, and feedback. I mentioned that the goal of communication is not just talking, but connection. I discussed that several barriers can hinder the connection between the speaker and the audience. They are fear and self-doubt, stereotypes, external noise, internal noise, and misinterpretation of intent. I also highlighted the nonverbal communication, Aristotle's Three Rhetorical Tools (ethos, pathos, and logos). The final reminder was "Your voice can move people, shift culture, and bring about change." We concluded with prayer.

Session Four

I invited the group to share praise reports or prayer requests, and then we prayed. The group watched TED Talk videos relating to public speaking and the five Ps of public speaking. The first TED Talk video we watched was entitled "The Secret to Great Public Speaking" by Jess Ekstrom. We discussed the content of the video. The main thing that

everyone appreciated about the video was when Jess talked about the two types of public speakers, which are spotlight speakers and lighthouse speakers. Spotlight speakers focus on “How do I sound?” or “Do they like me?” This type of speaker cares more about perfection and personal validation than connection. Lighthouse speakers focus on “What do my listeners need?” They communicate with clarity, compassion, and purpose. They care more about what they want to communicate rather than focusing on how they look or sound. The quote that stood out to the participants was “Being relatable doesn’t make you unreliable, it makes you connectable.”

The second TED Talk video we watched was entitled “How to Speak So That People Want to Listen” by Julian Treasure. The participants enjoyed the HAIL acronym, which stands for honesty, authenticity, integrity, and love. At the end of the video, we did the exercises that Julian does when he prepares for a public speaking engagement.
We went over the 5 Ps of public speaking, which are planning, preparation, practice, performance, and passion. We went over requirements for the final speeches, and I had each participant give the topic on which they would present. We concluded with prayer.

Session Five

I invited the group to share praise reports or prayer requests, and then we prayed. We did a check-in to see how things were going as they prepared for their final presentation. We went over key points that reiterated how to unleash one’s confidence and how to find one’s unique voice in public speaking. We covered finding your voice, the importance of public speaking, understanding your context, how to structure a speech,

engagement techniques, vocal techniques, how to manage nervousness and anxiety, and ultimately how to be authentic.

I highlighted the importance of practicing their speech to familiarize themselves with their content and to ensure they did not go over the allotted time they were given. We concluded with prayer.

Session Six

We did a check-in to see how things were going as they prepared for their final presentation. The participants gave their final presentations. They were given ten to fifteen minutes. After each participant, John Richards (professional associate) and I gave feedback.

Deviations from the Original Plan

There were a few deviations that occurred during the project implementation. There were certain topics I had scheduled to cover, but I did not because covering the foundational papers sparked great feedback and discussion. Therefore, we did not get to them. There was one participant who could not come in person until the fourth session, which also played a role in the research, deviating from the original planned schedule. However, I could fill him in on what was covered during the first three sessions.

Final Speech Feedback

Participant One

Participant One spoke on the Charlie Kirk shooting and how his political views did not align with Christian values. Here is the feedback (strengths and areas for improvement) that was provided for him: He did a great job with an engaging opening and relevance. He starts with a relatable scenario that drew the audience into a real-world issue. He raised timely and meaningful questions about freedom of speech, religious division, Christianity, and politics.

He had great structure and flow. He laid out three main questions that created a roadmap for the audience to follow. He connected Charlie Kirk's issue to HBCUs and workplace biases. He also offered practical advice on how to live out Christian values in the political area. And he highlighted the tension between personal faith and personal responsibilities in politics.

John Richards and I provided feedback for areas of improvement. We encourage the participant to be consistent with his structure. Although he provided the three-question method, there were times when he lost consistency. The speech was slightly under time. We suggested that he practice his speech ahead of time to ensure that he meets the time requirement. We also suggested that he practice emphasis markers so that the audience could see the important points he was trying to make. We talked about presentation mechanics. The participant forgot to introduce himself. There were times when he seemed hesitant. So, we told him to maintain confident delivery since he is considered the expert on the subject matter on which he is presenting.

Participant Two

Participant spoke on Pastor H. B. Charles, Jr. He demonstrated thorough knowledge of H. B. Charles, Jr.'s life and ministry. He had great use of his quotations. He had great vocal delivery and presence. He had strong projection and articulation that created audience engagement. His presentation was done in the allotted time that was given to the group.

His areas for improvement were his presentation slides lack alignment with what he was saying. He used a manuscript, which is helpful, but it reduced connection and presence. He lacked eye contact and could not control his body language. You could tell that he was nervous based on his hands being in his pocket and rocking back and forth. With him being a preacher, the delivery sometimes shifted into him preaching a sermon. So, we gave him the distinction between being a presenter and a preacher.

Participant Three

Participant Three spoke on Charles Haddon Spurgeon. He did a great job introducing his presentation with a compelling narrative around Spurgeon's suffering instead of his success. He had great oratorical skills. He did an amazing job with his vocal pacing, tone, and had great storytelling cadence. He kept the audience engaged by making relevant connections on how young Black and Brown men have suffered in the United States. He had good eye contact and confidence management. He exhibited great body composure. He also spoke within the time frame that was allotted.

Both participants Two and Three had the same areas for improvement. Participant Three is a preacher as well. So, we created a distinction between giving a presentation

and giving a sermon. John Richards stated, “Distinguishing between the two would strengthen academic delivery if you were to do this in a classroom context.” Going forward, we suggested that he should have a visual presentation with his speech to keep his speech from functioning as a sermon manuscript. There were some physical movements that were a distraction because of nerves and anxiety. He closed his presentation like a sermon. So, we suggested that a non-preaching closure would give the presentation a more refined finish.

Participant Four

Participant Four presented on Fred Hampton. The participant demonstrated a deep knowledge of who Fred Hampton was. He did not have a manuscript, but his content was rich and credible. He had consistent eye contact, and he was confident in his delivery. He did a great job handling pauses and transitions without making the moment awkward or drawing negative attention to himself. He made relevant connections on how Hampton’s life connected to some of the current political events, and he helped the audience see how they can be men who speak truth to power, promote justice and equality, and be the voice for those who are pushed to the margins.

His presentation when over the time limit that was allotted. John Richards and I stated that without a written manuscript or a detailed outline, you become unaware of time. The information that the participant conveyed was rich, bit it lacked transitions. There were times when the audience got lost in what he was communicating. He had a great PowerPoint, but the slides were not consistent with one another. We suggested the six-by-six guideline (maximum six bullets per slide, maximum six words per bullet). We

wanted him to have a concise close so that his presentation can give off a more professional finish.

Participant Five

Participant Five spoke on purpose. He had a clear thesis, which was “People with purpose can change the world.” The participant kept reiterating it throughout his presentation so that the audience would not forget what he was presenting . He had great delivery. He was conversational with the audience that sparked dialogue during his presentation. He had a great connection with the audience. He used historical and cultural illustrations on people who were people of purpose. He used historical figures like Muhammad Alit, Malcolm X, Jean-Jacques Dessalones, and Harriet Tubman. We highlighted how diverse he was in his selection of people he chose. He had great oral presence and exuded great confidence. He showed visible passion that made his speech persuasive.

The areas of improvement that we wanted to bring to his attention was structure and transition. He wrote scattered notes on a piece of paper, which made some parts of the presentation improvised. There were some parts that lacked clear transitions. We encouraged the participant to use a PowerPoint since he highlighted key historical figures.

Analysis of Participant’s Journal Reflections

The participants were asked to complete a journal reflection on their final presentations. After reading, this is the analysis that was discovered: The participants’

reflections show that each participant communicated with clarity and had a clear message. The messages ranged from mentorship in the Christian journey, the importance of purpose, the importance of knowing how to live out your Christians values in politic, and perseverance through suffering.

There were some speakers who expressed initial nervousness and anxiety. However, most of them experienced an increase in their confidence and composure as they progressed in their speeches. There was one participant that expressed he had full confidence and command of the room from the beginning. All believed that their language was clear and impactful. However, there were some who believed that eye contact and audience connection was inconsistent. Each participant believed that the feedback that was given by John Richards and me was helpful, encouraging, and rooted in a sincere desire to support and to help them improve.

Analysis of Pre- and Post-Survey

Pre-Survey

The participants' confidence ranged from zero to eight out of ten. There was a wide range of comfort with public speaking. Confidence tends to rise when there is a familiarity with the content, passion for the subject matter, when one is prepared, and familiarity with the context and the people within the context. Confidence tends to decrease when the size of audience is a large number, wrestling with the pressure to perform and the pressure to be perfect. The participant's confidence and comfort level is based on a desirable or suitable situation for them.

Each participant expressed that they deal with anxiety, stress, fear, nervousness, and overthinking before engaging in public speaking. However, the coping mechanisms that they use are prayer, breathing techniques to manage emotions, movement to release nervous energy, and doing their best to keep the main thing the main thing, and that is focusing on the message rather than focusing on the audience.

Each participant has experience with public speaking. Some are preached in churches, some have done classroom presentation, and some have engaged in work that required them to give guidance and instruction. There was a consensus on how they felt after public speaking. The shared experience is in the beginning, they feel fear, during the middle, they feel a nice groove or flow, and at the end, the feel like a load has been lifted off their shoulders. There is a growth in confidence after speaking, although they still feel anxiousness, fear, and nervousness when they must do it.

Each participant believe that they can express their thoughts clearly when they are prepared. Some rely on manuscripts or notes while others can when they have mental clarity and have internalized the content. Having a structured manuscript, notes or outline and practice is what helps each participant with clear communication.

Participants expressed discomfort when they must engage in public speaking. The moments that were reported are preaching opportunities, giving speeches, when the environment has high expectations, and when the audience's response or reaction is minimal. There were some that reported that silence or lack of communication from the audience increases their anxiety.

Some of the participants have avoided public speaking opportunities because of fear of failure, lack of preparation, overthinking, and self-doubt about their capability.

Some reported that they pushed through their fears or doubts because of calling or personal conviction.

Participants reported that their cultural and background has an influence on how they feel about public speaking. Those cultural factors include fast speech and accents, the fear of being misunderstood or not taken seriously because of age and being a quiet or introverted individual. However, there were some positive factors. Those positive factors including family support is what helped develop their communication skills and being exposed to reading books and writing.

Participants reported barriers to their confidence in public speaking. Those barriers are overthinking, pacing because of anxiety, fear of judgment, too much dependence on manuscripts, difficulty with eye contact, and the pressure of perfectionism. The consensus is more internal than it is external.

Each participant expressed that they had specific goals they wanted to improve because of participating in my focus group. They wanted to learn and grow in knowing how to slow down and how to control pacing, they wanted to strengthen their vocabulary, they wanted to be more intentional with making eye contact, they wanted to cultivate sermon flow and know how to deliver their sermon with clarity, and they also wanted to learn how to use silence or pausing strategically. All participants believed that confidence would help them grow as leaders, improve preaching connection and effectiveness, expand their influence and impact within their respective callings/ministries.

The analysis of the pre-survey shows that this group have the desire and determination to grow as communicators. Yes, they all report that fear and anxiety is real and is a major emotional factory, but they don’t want to be held back because of it. They

want to overcome those emotional factors and use the voice that God has given them to speak and make an impact in their spheres of influence.

Post-Survey

The participant's confidence range reported higher confidence levels. The range ranged from four to nine out of ten. This was influenced by familiarity with the content of the speech, audience comfort and audience receptivity, preparation, and prayer. Participants' emotional condition before speaking is the same. There are still feelings of anxiety, nervousness, and fear of inadequacy. The coping mechanisms were the same as well. But there were two who cope with or manage their emotions by reframing their anxiety as excitement and self-affirmation and self-reassurance. So, there was an increase in emotional intelligence and positive coping mechanisms to help them emotionally prepare for their speeches.

The participant's impact of recent speaking opportunity is initial nervousness, but as the presentation is happening, those nerves become confidence. Constructive feedback is welcomed, valued, and applied for future speaking opportunities. All participants feel and believe that they can communicate their thoughts clearly when they have rehearsed their speech. However, some of the participants believe that they are speaking clearly and with clarity can get loss when they cannot manage their anxiety, when they're having a hard time managing their pace and losing their flow under pressure. Participants express the same uncomfortable speaking opportunities on their pre-survey. However, they reported that having conversation before speaking can mitigate the stress, nerves, and anxieties.

The participant's avoidance of speaking opportunities has decreased compared to the pre-survey. One participant reported no past avoidance and had a willingness to engage in public speaking. Other participants reported that there's occasional hesitation because of fear, not because of their ability. So, there has been an increase in willingness to engage in public speaking although there are still some nerves and discomfort. The participants stated that there's a minimal connection between speaking and cultural and background influence. This shows that there has been a shift compared to the pre-survey.

The participant's barriers to confidence are still the same. However, they reported that they would learn how to reframe those emotions into positive perspectives so that they can overcome those barriers. The participants still want to improve in eye contact and body management, pacing and tempo, confidence, composure, and comfort, and message delivery and flow.

Participants report that they associate increased confidence with leadership, greater authenticity for ministry impact, college and career success, and higher self-esteem.

There has been clear growth and transition between the pre- and post-surveys. In the pre-survey, the participants reported heavy fear, anxiety, and the pressure of perfectionism. However, in the post-survey, there has been an increase in confidence through repetition and rehearsals of speech, preparation, and there is an opening to constructive feedback.

Participants in this focus group created and cultivated some noticeable positive development in their public speaking abilities. This project created opportunities for the

participants to grow a delivery, manuscript or notes organization, and audience awareness. Because of this project, there has a been an improvement in the participants' confidence. There has been cultivation in communication skills, and there has been a growth in knowledge on how to create speeches that will connect with the audiences they will speak to.

Summary of Participant Learning

The participants gained an understanding on to be effective in public speaking and how to create connection with communication. They learned how to create a clear message and how to support it with structure, simple yet powerful language, and techniques. Feedback from John Richards and me helped improve the participants' mechanics such as eye contact, pacing, body composure, and it helped with improving their confidence and comfort so that they can have a strong and solid stage presence. They learned about the importance of being authentic to themselves rather than mimicking those they look up to. This project created an experience for the participants that allowed them to grow as public speakers who know how to communicate their ideas with clarity and meaning that creates an impactful connection to those to which they will speak.

Summary of Learning

I learned that his project could help those who have the desire to grow in confidence and comfort so that they can engage in public speaking and ministry. The sessions were crafted with intentionality with a goal in mind of not just helping young

adult Black males speak, but communication with passion and persuasion. My hypothesis was supported by that when you go through a six-week training on communication, there will be an increase in confidence and comfort and a shift from being reluctant to speak to being willing to speak despite the fears, anxieties, and nervousness.

Conclusion

The project went as well as expected. I wanted to help young adult Black males overcome their fear of public speaking and help grow their confidence and their comfort so that they can engage in public speaking and public ministry. The discussions were thought-provoking and helpful for both me and the participants. The presentations went well. I enjoyed hearing the wide range of topics that were covered and communicated by each participant. Each participant developed meaningful relationships outside of the focus group and they were supportive of one another along the six-week journey. The engagement was not forced; it was organic.

I wished I had had more participants. There were ten who showed interest, but only five committed. I wished I had had more time to cover more topics that would help each participant to engage in public speaking. In the future, I would change the age range from eighteen to twenty-four to thirteen to seventeen because most of the interested people fell in that age range. I would also change his biblical text from Exodus 4:10-17 to 2 Timothy 1:7 which states, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgment” (CSB). This text speaks directly to the fear that young adult Black males deal with and struggle with relating to public speaking. I would also bring in

a professional public speaker who could help and give constructive feedback when it is time to give final presentations.

The participants were impacted in a positive way. Based on the post-survey, there's been a positive impact on the participants' self-esteem and an increase in their confidence and comfort. I believe there will be an increase in young adult Black males participating in public speaking opportunities at St. Mark Baptist Church.

My dream for this ministry is to make it a workshop outside of the church context. I want to take this ministry into schools, places of employment, and other churches in the country. Public speaking is a fear that everyone struggles with. So, I want to use my story and my strengths and weaknesses to help others grow as communicators in whatever career field they are in. I have the desire to do the project again, and I plan on publishing it. I also wants to create a workbook that helps track one's speaking opportunities and gives them the opportunity to reflect and to see how they can grow and improve so that they can be better equipped and grow in their confidence and comfort for their next speaking engagement.

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